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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**MASCULINISING AND FEMINISING IDENTITIES:**

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO FACTORS SHAPING GRADE FIVE  
LEARNERS' SEXUAL IDENTITIES**

A minor dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

by

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HMLHIL001

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## DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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29 September 2005

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors which shape the Grade 5 learners' sexual identities within the context of HIV/AIDS.

Data responses were obtained from Grade 5 learners within 5 primary schools in the Western Cape and the data collection strategies included questionnaires, focus group discussions, individual interviews and unobtrusive observations.

The findings suggest that Grade 5 learners construct their sexual identities through different and differing influences within complex discursive spaces. These influences, embedded in predominantly heterosexual discourses, seem to perpetuate a distinct behavioural trend which masculinise and feminise students' sexual identities in particular ways that work to reinscribe the dominant discourse and its concomitant social practices.



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## CHAPTER 1

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The year 1994 heralded the commencement of a new era of democracy in South Africa. For the vast majority of its people, most of whom had languished in a state of poverty and oppression, the coming of democracy brought new hope. A process of major transformation began in government which affected all aspects of public life. Government, especially the health and education sectors, made major adjustments in its policies to reflect the new spirit of democracy, justice and equality.

In the midst of this euphoria, the country and its people had to come face-to-face with the HIV/AIDS pandemic which had been criminally ignored by the previous Apartheid regime. The disease had, and continues to do so, an adverse effect on all South Africans, threatening the social, political and economic gains that were made after 1994. The scale and impact of the disease, as is widely known, are great. Mortality rates have increased, as have child-headed homes and the incidence of single parenting. These are but a few of the consequences which illustrate the impact which the pandemic has imposed on everyone. All these negative outcomes have forced government authorities to have a closer look at the pandemic.

While biomedical knowledge of the pandemic is available, this is not sufficient, it needs to be said, for combating the disease. Given that the disease is largely spread through sexual contact, an understanding of human sexuality is absolutely necessary if more comprehensive measures are to be adopted to reduce and ultimately bring the disease under control.

In this regard, the case can be made that education is one of the most effective strategies at society's disposal to address sexual behavioural change. It has to nurture amongst people, particularly among children, the capacity for critical reflection on issues of sexuality. If this is not done and done so effectively, the whole society could be in jeopardy.

But children are not blank slates waiting for education to happen to them. They are active agents within the social context of their schools, which are an extension of the larger world in which they live. The school, as an institution, provides them with a framework of reference in which they are

busy actively constructing their sexual identity. This we need to understand. It is through researching issues pertaining to the sexuality of children, that we might be able to gain a better insight into the kinds of intervention programmes that are needed and might work in combating the disease. With this kind of knowledge, resources, curriculum structures and education policies can be revised and adjusted, in order to ensure that education contributes functionally to combating the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, by bringing about desired behavioural changes.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Statistics have shown that one in three children are having sex by the age of ten (NARAN 2005). Half of all children and young people who acquire the disease, become infected before they turn 25. Seventeen percent of all children who deliberately spread the virus know that they are HIV positive. Twenty percent do not believe that condoms prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

School-based HIV/AIDS preventative sexual programmes in Sub Saharan Africa provide the greatest promise for educating young children about HIV/AIDS, since 67% of primary school entrants reach grade 5 (UNAIDS 2000). In the absence of a direct cure, education is evidently an essential tool in combating and curtailing this pandemic.

## 3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In most studies of child identity, insufficient emphasis is placed on the sexuality of children. Children are viewed as sexually passive, biological and incipient beings. These perceptions need to be reconsidered. HIV/AIDS and the new context of globalization have repositioned the child. Notions of children growing up in idyllic innocence are no longer realistic. Closer scrutiny therefore needs to be taken of children as they are attempting to use their agency and are being shaped by the social contexts within which they find themselves (James, Jenks and Prout 1998).

Children are susceptible to change. Therefore it is crucial, that the influences which impact on their sexuality, be recognized and identified. This will facilitate the conceptualization of HIV/AIDS preventative interventions. It is in the spirit of this objective that this study is being undertaken.

#### 4. AIMS OF THE STUDY

This qualitative study investigates the ways in which ten year old children construct their sexual identity. According to Parker, there is a paucity of theory about human sexuality in general. He attributes this to the naturalist viewpoint of sexuality, that has played an influential role in AIDS research thus far. Interestingly, Parker foregrounds the issue of context by explaining that "...sexual desire has been treated, in many ways as a kind of given, and the social and cultural factors shaping sexual experience in different settings have largely been ignored" (Parker 1995:261). Scant as our understanding might be of sexuality in our wider world, it is even more so the case that we know very little about child sexuality. Given this line of logic, especially with a view to understanding sexuality in the context of HIV/AIDS, this study aims to examine how sexual identities are constructed and reconstructed by intermediate phase children in some primary schools in the Western Cape.

##### 4.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

In the context of HIV/AIDS, how do intermediate phase children in the Western Cape construct their sexual identities?

##### 4.2 SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- What are the social practices that shape children's sexual identity construction?
- How do these social practices work to shape their sexual identity construction?

The answers to the above questions seemed crucial within the current and challenging situation in which ten-year-old children find themselves. As an educator, I witness these tendencies and the nuances with which sexual identities are taking shape within our children on a daily basis. I have also had the opportunity to see how children are positioning themselves within this environment. A major concern was whether the environment in which our children are growing up was providing an atmosphere which contributed positively to children's sexual identity construction. In order to analyse this question, a closer look had to be taken at the manner in which children construct their sexual identities and which specific social practices influence this moulding process.

In order to aptly answer the above-mentioned questions, I initially reviewed relevant literature and empirical studies which could help me situate my question within specified theoretical perspectives. A suitable research design and appropriate data collection tools had to be found in order to enhance my research. Since I was dealing with children, it was imperative to have a sound knowledge of researching children. There were also limitations involved with this research. These I will discuss elsewhere. The data collected was analysed and themes which emerged, enabled me to understand and answer the research questions.

The following is a description of the structure and outline of this research study:

Each chapter reflects a particular aspect. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical perspectives and empirical studies on which the study is based. This chapter presents a trajectory, in order to explain the current debates in the field. It also endeavours to provide a theoretical framework which is then further used to analyse responses. The empirical studies present a view of current research pertaining to the issue at hand.

Chapter 3 examines the research design and methodology which were implemented. A description of the data collection tools and the motivation behind it, are provided. In researching children, the sensitivity of the topic is also discussed. In addition, detailed information is provided concerning the site and sample. The range of ethical considerations and how data was analysed are also given. The limitations experienced while doing this research, are listed.

Chapter 4 provides a presentation of findings. This has been presented in the form of emerging themes which could be drawn from the data collection tools implemented.

Chapter 5 seeks to explore the findings as presented in Chapter 4, hereby highlighting and analyzing the data. The theoretical perspectives provided in chapter 2 are applied in this chapter in order to provide the answers to the research questions as set in chapter 1. The research study is brought to a final conclusion and recommendations are then provided.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the theoretical dimensions of the debates relating to sexuality and identity. These perspectives will inform the subsequent discussions of different ways of viewing childhood and relevant aspects relating to sexual identity construction.

With the ambition of developing an understanding of how South African children understand their sexual identity in the context of HIV/AIDS, this literature review maps out the following:

- \* The historical trajectory of child development
- \* Postmodernity
- \* Sexuality

In the historical trajectory of children's sexuality, reference is primarily made to Western theorists. These theorists do not always problematise the diverse contexts in which children live, bringing into question, therefore, the universality of notions such as 'phases of development' generally used in this literature (Corsaro 1997; James, Jenks and Prout 1998; Lee 2001; Aitchison 2003). This notwithstanding, for the purpose of my study, one cannot ignore the literature that pertains to children's development. The approach that is taken here is to use this literature to situate the reality of the South African context as it relates to my study. The context within which the HIV/AIDS pandemic is experienced is, therefore, closely investigated, paying particular attention to how South African children take position within it and are positioned by it.

Included in this chapter are the theoretical framework and an analysis of empirical studies pertaining to my specific research study.

### 2.2 Understanding childhood development

Childhood is, by any definition, a complex concept. It is perceived in many different ways and comes with a variety of explanations and interpretations. In an attempt to manage the disparate

nature of the field, my initial step is to track the developmental path along which the concept has progressed. Through viewing the historicity of childhood development, we can "...theorize the field of childhood study by embracing the variety of approaches that will open up and also critique both extant and emergent debates about children" (James, Jenks and Prout 1998:3).

Mead and Wolfenstein, maintain that childhood is a phenomenon which was, until the onset of modernity, taken for granted, "...a figure of speech, a mythological subject rather than a subject of articulate scrutiny" (cited in Jenks 1996:60). There has, however, within the last 100 years, been a major change in this discussion where understandings of childhood have shifted from those which accorded the child a minimal sense of recognition to more contemporary understandings that have begun to encompass a sense and an understanding that children have rights that are no different, and, in some senses, even greater than those of adults. Much of this change has come about as a result of notions of identity moving away from an essentialist biologism, where, for example, childhood was understood as a biological and natural phenomenon, to more social notions seeking to be more holistic (James, Jenks and Prout 1998). To reflect this, an explanation will be given of the various theories of child development. Notions of childhood will specifically be examined from the modern to the postmodern era. Throughout this trajectory, an attempt will be made to show the diversity of theories and disciplines that have traversed the discussion and how each has contributed differently to the understanding of childhood.

By viewing the wide range of perspectives relating to childhood development, childhood can be better understood and made more intelligible (Jenks 1996:36). The perspective from which childhood development is viewed, determines the definition of childhood.

As the discussion of the literature below attempts to make clear, childhood development entails a process of advancement out of which an identity develops. In terms of this, development is a critical process of passing through important stages. Important in reading this literature though, is recognizing how developmental theories are used as frameworks of reference.

### 2.2.1 MODERN CONCEPTIONS OF IDENTITY

The Enlightenment, that period in modern history when rationality came to triumph over the fatalism of feudalism, heralded the commencement of what we have come to call modernity (Giddens 1991). Central to this era of modernity is the rise of the individual and the development of notions of self. The 'self' as a site of control over one's destiny, and as a space to be filled in by the individual, constitutes the core intellectual contribution that modernity has made to understandings of identity. Within this contribution, a number of schools of thought have emerged such as those of the naturalists, constructivists and various kinds of psychoanalysts.

A few words are necessary about the nature of this modern era. Its central characteristic is expressed and made manifest in what Marxists have called the capital-labour (Hughes, Sharrock, Martin 2003) couplet where machinery and labour power are brought into a new relationship in the production process leading to the broadening, expansion and complexity of modern life. Out of this have emerged the structures and institutions of what we have come to call capitalism, with its complex social infrastructure sitting on top of its production base and giving life to it in surveillance institutions such as prisons, schools and hospitals. Also out of it, and in response to it in some ways, have come new organizations such as trade unions, political movements and other civil society structures operating across compressed time and space social relations (Giddens 1991). The social world that has emerged in this period is, as a consequence, complex. At one end, as we shall see, it is driven by the powerful social forces of the new economy. At the other, in contradiction, it celebrates the emergence of the autonomous individual. Smith has argued that the struggle of individuals to build their identities is important to understand (cited in Stevens and Wetherell 1996). Significantly, this struggle is played out even in religion where, for example, strong emphasis has come to be placed on the individual self, with the claim that the enactment of individual agency ultimately enables social good to be achieved (Taylor 1989).

The consequences of these shifts were major. Giddens explains that these developments constituted a "troubling and tumultuous phenomenon..." (Giddens 1991:14). Features of this modernist period, McNamee explains, included a search for individuality, objectivity, consistency as well as a unitary and enduring identity (Grodin and Lindlof 1996:142). In addition, stability, rationality and coherence were also prized for the ideal of the fixed personality which emerged during this era. These features are very manifest in the perspectives taken by the developmental theorists, who,



while having different constructions of the self, generally assume characteristics such as coherence, stability and fixedness as being 'natural'. Important about this general observation is recognizing the degree to which fixedness, stability and coherence have come to shape understandings of biological essence and the notions of innocence, rationality, morality, cognition and sexuality that follow. Each of these constructs will now be discussed. Thereafter I will focus on social theory perspectives.

#### 2.2.1.1 The construction of the child: a material subject of the physiological

Naturalistic perspectives have a common-sense logic about them. Common amongst the various naturalistic views is the idea that one's character, identity and personality are based on the pre-social biological essence of one's body. Sociologically this unchanging, pre-social body reduces the complexities of social relationships (Shilling 1993).

These naturalistic views imply that the abilities and limitations of the human body define what the individual is all about. In terms of this argument, inequalities and questions of power are not socially constructed, but emanate out of the essence of the biological body. The body is merely reduced to a biological entity which carries the unitary identity.

This approach is important in terms of what it says about gender. The social position of women and men, and their identities, are determined by their specific biologies. The purpose and place of a woman in the world is based entirely on her body (Lacqueur 1990).

During the period of naturalistic dominance, an important distinction was made between men and women in terms of nature and culture. Women belonged to nature, while culture was the domain of manhood. Women's embodiment was, for example, typified by life cycles associated with pregnancy, childbirth and menstruation. They were the bearers of nature. Men, on the other hand, were accorded the freedom to make their own world (Jordonova 1989), and so, consequently, were the bearers of culture. This understanding was entrenched during the Enlightenment when understandings of the body clearly became attached to emerging understandings of anatomy and physiology. These understandings were used to establish a model of social difference based on homologies between male and female reproductive systems (Duroche 1990). The notion of 'sexuality' provided a self-identity firmly based in relation to the opposite sex (Laqueur 1990:3).

Within the context of Enlightenment beliefs in universal, inalienable and equal rights, it was in the male image that human identity came to be constructed and so male authority over women resulted in practice. The reinterpretation of women's bodies solved the ideological problems involved in explaining gender disparity and inequality in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Laqueur 1987). Ironically, despite the progressive language of the Enlightenment, the movement propelled binary understandings of self relating to mind and body, and sex and gender. Along this binary continuum, men were associated with rationality and the mind, while women were associated with the body and nature. Sex was associated with biology and embodiment, while gender was associated with social and cultural practices (Woodward 2002).

#### 2.2.1.2 The construction of the innocent child

Key theorists in the Enlightenment contributed to specific understandings of the child. Central amongst these theorists were Locke and Rousseau, both of whom were responsible for generating the notion, which came to be widely used, of childhood innocence.

Locke defined the individual as having an identity that always stayed the same. He maintained that it is consciousness, instead of the body, that amalgamates all the varied actions performed by the individual and formulates a self who is the same person as before. He coined the term '*tabula rasa*' (Locke 1964) which means a blank slate and is used to describe the state of mind at birth. This empiricist argument further claims that experience, within the sphere of the environment, is the key contributory factor which furnishes the mind with ideas.

Bellah (cited in Woodward 2002) has argued that the Lockian *tabula rasa* selfhood, which exercises choice on the basis of personal needs and wants, is unsustainable. He maintains that it results in an 'empty unencumbered and improvisational self,' which obscures reality from all aspects: personal, social and moral. The link between person and society has therefore been minimized and reduced.

Rousseau, who drew on Locke's theory, invented the modern notion that childhood is a specific period of human life with specific needs for stimulation and education. This model emphasized the innocence of the child (Burman 1994:53). He maintained that it was possible to preserve the 'original perfect nature' of the child, 'by means of the careful control of his education and

environment, based on an analysis of the different physical and psychological stages through which he passed from birth to maturity' Children are saturated with vigor and immanence. Rousseau focused on the environment and on the need to develop opportunities for new experiences and reflection. As a naturalist, Rousseau had a great belief in the possibility of preserving the intrinsic, fundamental nature of the child. He strongly emphasized the innate powers of children. Children, in his view, are uncorrupted, special, innocent, pure and uninformed by the social context in which they reside.

Having reviewed the construction of the innocent child, a discussion of the construction of the rational child will now ensue and I shall draw on the work of Piaget, Freud, Kohlberg and Erikson who are known as “modern titans of developmental theory” (Bruner in Woodward 2002).

#### 2.2.1.3 The construction of the rational child

Piaget (1896–1980) is the main proponent of the developmental approach to intelligence and cognitive development. According to Piaget, cognitive development is based on the fact that intelligence is a kind of biological adaptation and that it comes about as the individual interacts with the world around him. This development is based on two pivotal assumptions about intelligence, namely that intelligence is a form of biological adaptation and that it becomes organized in different ways as individuals develop and interact with the world around them (Lemmer and Badenhorst 1997).

Piaget emphasized the need for the child to perform particular cognitive functions at certain stages of his life. He proposes four stages of development, which include the following:

- the sensorimotor stage, where the children, from birth to two years, mainly learn through their senses and are influenced by environmental factors;

- the preoperational phase, where the children aged 2-7, start using words and symbols, thus becoming more linguistic. They can now ascribe living attributes to non-living things;

- the concrete-operational phase wherein 7 –11 year old children are capable of operational thinking in the presence of concrete objects. They use operations in thought if objects are

concretely present. They think logically about concrete things, but cannot reason abstractly about possibilities;

the formal-operational phase. According to Piaget, 11-12 year old children are set to involve metacognition to a greater or lesser degree. This implies that the children can reflect on their own learning (Lemmer and Badenhorst 1997).

From the above, it is clear that Piaget is focused on the construction of knowledge and the step-by-step procedure of child development. Piaget is not concerned with theories of attachment or particular contexts. Throughout this theory, it appears that all children develop within a set framework and each one's identity is bound to a specified and prescribed format (Urdang 2002). Piaget's theory proposes that children experience a series of distinct transformations in their thinking as their chronological age develops (Stainton and Stainton 2001). The individual is seen by Piaget as an "exemplar, a typical representative of the species" (Jenks 1996:23-24).

Piaget maintains that a designated level of development has to be reached at each of the stages mentioned above and childhood is viewed as ...“an inadequate precursor to the real state of human being, namely being grown up” (James et al., 1998:18). For Piaget, the focus is on the individual child's ability to master the world on his or her own terms. The focus rests on the effects of individual interpersonal experiences hence defining development as primarily individualistic (Corsaro 1997:13-15).

According to Piaget, there is an innate propensity in each child to compensate for environmental intrusions (Corsaro 1997). The ability to master the world and all its challenges, demands that children utilize this natural tendency which they possess. This propensity, together with the societal activities, ultimately determines the response of children to various situations and intrusions.

In addition to this, a constant recognition of the level of cognition will also provide a motivation for specific behaviour and response. This will facilitate the application of suitable intervention mechanisms to promote more favourable responses.

#### 2.2.1.4 The construction of the moral child

Kohlberg (1927-1987) based his stage theory of moral development largely on the work of Piaget. The acknowledgement of the impact of the social-ecological world, which forms part of Piaget's theory, is the initial point from which Kohlberg began his theory. Kohlberg believed people progressed in their moral reasoning through a fixed number of stages which followed consecutively. A stringent and consistent stage progression existed and no stage could be passed over. Kohlberg asserts that individuals can only proceed through one stage at a time to achieve moral rationality. He states that children's competencies proceed through a range of distinct shifts as children develop and progress (Stainton and Stainton 2001). Moral development, as proposed by Kohlberg, occurs at three levels, namely the level of preconventional moral reasoning, conventional moral reasoning and postconventional moral reasoning (Kohlberg in Lemmer and Badenhorst 1997: 239).

Morality forms an integral part of the child's identity. It is this feature of identity which concerns the degree of responsibility carried by individuals for their own actions in the formation of self. This enables children to view themselves introspectively, which makes it possible for growth and reasoning to occur.

Children are often placed at the crossroads when making choices strongly linked to morality and consciousness, and the choices they make can be either detrimental to themselves or advantageous. The ripple effects which ensue from the decisions they make might result in constraints or advancement. The current context of sexual pluralism and promiscuity draws attention to the enormity of the choices children have to make. The complexity of the times calls for children who have strong moral development. It is in the context of this that a discussion on the sexual child now follows.

#### 2.2.1.5 The construction of the conflictual and sexual child

Freud (Cole and Cole 2001), maintains that a state of natural sexuality does not exist. Instead he maintains that sexuality is psychological and is "a construction relatively independent of biology" (Breen 1993:3). He analyses childhood development "in terms of age-related drives..." which include five developmental stages. These include the oral phase of infancy (birth to 1 year). During

this stage the mouth is the main source of sensations which includes sucking and later biting; the anal phase (1 – 3 years). The anus and rectum are now the main source of sensations – involving the hold and release of faeces; the phallic phase of toddlers, (3 – 5 years). The sexual organs, the penis or clitoris, serve as the main source of sensation; the latency phase of the school-age child. The period of dormancy which lasts until puberty and the genital phase of the adolescent (puberty onwards). In this phase the genitals are the focus of pleasurable sensations in all individuals (Salkind cited in Greig and Taylor 1999).

The sexual development of the child, according to Freud, takes precedence: “...all biological drives must ultimately serve the fundamental sex drive,..” (Cole and Cole 2001). The child is now an embodied being and these developmental stages are crucial to future personality development.

Berzoff maintains that Freud’s “psychosexual drive theory synthesized the concept of children’s erogenous zones as being associated with the kinds of relationships, attachments, symptoms, character traits, and psychological preoccupations they face at each stage of development” (Urdang 2002:41). “Freudian theory positions the child as no more than a state of unfinished business or becoming...intentionality and agency...these are absorbed into a vocabulary of drives and instincts, with sexuality becoming a major dimension in ... development ...” (James et al.1998: 20-21). No identity can therefore, according to Freud, be understood outside the sexual.

Another important aspect of Freud’s theory is his emphasis on the unconscious. Freud therefore maintains that the sexual, since it emerges out of the unconscious, is not always rational (Greig and Taylor 1999). This emphasizes the importance which psychoanalysis plays in identity construction. Actions that occur out of the unconscious, are not necessarily logical, but often inexplicable and irrational. The sexual, therefore, since it emerges out of the unconscious is not always rational (Greig and Taylor 1999).

Freud proposes that the mental structure of the ‘id’ refers to the instinctual drives described as unconscious and pleasure-seeking, constantly demanding the satisfaction of these bodily drives. The ‘ego’ originates out of the ‘id’ and refers to the role of interaction and mediation wherein coping mechanisms are enabled and external realities result in modification through socialization. The ‘superego’ then represents the processes of rationality and consciousness used to regulate conduct from childhood to adulthood. It is the means whereby the ‘ego’ holds the ‘id’ in check. It

is this constant friction, which exists as the 'id' and the 'superego', which is the 'engine of developmental change' (Salkind cited in Greig and Taylor 1999).

#### 2.2.1.6 The construction of the psychosocial child

Erikson (1902-1991) who was strongly influenced by Freud, expanded on this psychosexual theory of development. Erikson used aspects of Freud's theory to develop his own theory. He argued that the fundamental force which drives human behaviour was not merely biological but based on social interaction, hence his initiation of the psychosocial theory.

Erikson's main emphasis was on "the social and cultural influence on personality rather than the biological and sexual maturation" (Greig and Taylor 1999:21). He proposed 'The Eight Stages of Man.' These stages cover the complete lifespan of man from infancy to adulthood and consist of the following stages: trust versus mistrust; autonomy versus shame and doubt; initiative versus guilt; industry versus inferiority; identity versus role confusion; intimacy versus isolation; generativity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair (Erikson in Lemmer and Badenhorst 1997).

Erikson claims that all people have the same basic needs and these needs are to be met by the communities in which people live. This means that human identity is driven by 'a conscious striving for continuity...a solidarity with a group's ideals' (Erikson 1968: 208).

Erikson maintains that when there is a steady social environment, the construction of identity occurs smoothly. An interruption occurs in periods of social turmoil. In these times, identity crises become central to social life. This term 'identity crisis' has been introduced by Erikson. Resolution of conflicts between social demands and individual needs were recognized as part of life. The identity crisis will be revealed according to the social context and society in which the child lives. Social contexts are important since it is here where identities are formed and negotiated (Woodward 2002).

### 2.2.2 Social theorists' perspectives

“While psychoanalysis may privilege the personal through its focus on the psyche, it is impossible to conceptualize the personal, psychic space outside the social world that gives it meaning” (Woodward 2002:166). Stevens maintains that it is the social which provides the avenue for the survival of persons and that social practices serve as the basis or foundation in determining the kind of person, “...we assimilate from the social settings in which we live” (Stevens 1996:21).

Childhood development has progressed from being understood as a purely isolated, biological, predicted set of events that occur within an individual to an understanding of development as societal, whereby a strong dependence on others is experienced.

The development of the child is seen within the sphere of social space. It is within this space that the interaction among members of the society serves as impetus to development and growth. Graue, Walsh, Ceglowski (1998) maintain that these Post-Piagetian perspectives stress the importance of cultural and socially constructed positions.

A brief review of child development as it occurs within the collective social action theory approach, the social ecological approach and the social constructionist approach, will now be presented.

#### 2.2.2.1 The alienated collective subject of the social

Marx maintained that individuals are shaped, influenced and constrained by the social order in which they live. Social formation is the determining factor which foregrounds the course of society. According to Marx, forms of social life are originally shaped by material economic processes, and as these change, so do the culture and institutions of society. Economic processes are vital as they play an integral part in conditioning the social, political and intellectual life process in general (cited in Hughes et al. 2003). The role of human beings is that they are essentially producers who must work in and on their natural environment in order to survive. This process of productivity is not a solitary activity, but is done collectively, which is characteristic of identity.

Identity, as proposed by Marx, is also strongly determined by social forces. “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (cited in Hughes et al. 2003).



Individuals' characters are shaped by the existing culture and this results in them being socialized into the ways of society (Hughes et al. 2003).

Marx emphasizes the historical priority of society. He says, "The more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole...an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society" (Marx 1973:84).

In the above discussion society is regarded as a 'force'. The powerful impact of social order, albeit productivity or promiscuity, determine identity construction, since the collective has a strong effect on the individual.

#### 2.2.2.2 Social Interactionist Approach

Social action theory consists of three sub-fields namely phenomenology, symbolic interaction and ethnomethodology. For the purpose of this review, I will focus on social interactionism, as proposed by Mead, since it prioritises social interaction between individuals.

What is of essence in the theory of Mead is internalizing events which involve interaction with others. It entails a cognitive process which commences with others as its foundation. The self, he maintains, is part of the communicative process, which reflects upon itself. The self is constantly modified throughout life by interaction with others resulting in a process of continual reflection (Hogg and Abrams 1988:16).

Society's influence on the individual is mediated by self-conception. The social interactionist focuses on the way in which 'social actors' consciously act. Their interpretation of the behaviour of others, determines the understanding of how the world is socially constructed. This construction is determined by the meanings people give to behaviour and the manner in which the meaning of behaviour is interpreted. Individuals are in constant reflexivity or monitoring of their actions and social selves. Children acquire the ability to take on the perspectives of others, which is crucial both to social and moral development as well as to self-awareness (Wetherell and Maybin 1996).

The social context within which interaction occurs is significant for both their interpretation of the behaviour of others and the way in which they choose to behave at a specific time. Mead (cited in Graue, et al. (1998) maintains that social contexts condition the ways in which we choose to behave and it is the broad and complex web of personal and temporal interactions that constitute daily lives and development.

#### 2.2.2.3 A Social-ecological approach

Another approach which strongly includes society and the environment, is the ecological approach of which Bronfenbrenner is an important proponent. According to him, the child is exposed to a range of environmental systems namely the “microsystem” (e.g family); the more complex “mesosystem” (e.g. family – school); the “exosystem” (e.g occupation of relatives) and the “macrosystem” ( e.g. national value system) (Bronfenbrenner in Greg and Taylor 1999).

The ‘social ecology’ model emphasizes the link between the changing immediate environment and the unique individual in it. It also highlights the major components which form an integral part of the child’s construction of identity. Identity illustrates the distinct connection between the personal and the social, hereby justifying the various components within this social-ecological approach (Greg and Taylor 1999).

#### 2.2.2.4 The social constructionist approach

Throughout this review it is evident that a myriad of theorists regarded child development as biological, pre-determined and prescriptive. These developmental trends, which remained oblivious of the everyday experiences of children, were based on distinct stages, domains, zones or levels of achievements.

“Social constructionism ... stresses issues of plurality and, far from this model recommending a unitary form, it foregrounds diverse constructions” (James et al., 1998: 27). Social theories have emancipated children from the constraints of naturalism and biology and placed them into a culturally located and humanly constituted sphere. This sphere is permeated by social interaction which directly impacts on behaviour and development. They further maintain that children should be viewed in the construction and formulation of their social lives, as well as those by whom they

are surrounded with and the societies in which they reside (James et al., 1988). This paradigm of social constructionism emphasizes that children are “social agents in their own right,” who should be seen as social phenomena, as a “social institution that is the result of historical and political processes” (Lee 2001:47).

Thus far, in this review of the trajectory of development in both the traditional and modern eras, children have been viewed, in turn, as being unitary and social beings. Each era has projected a distinctive narrative for the way in which children developed. Evident is the fact that each era heralds a new perspective on childhood and sexual identity construction.

In order to fully comprehend the manner in which sexual identity construction can be interpreted at present, it is essential to briefly focus on the postmodern era. This will foreground the ensuing discussion on sexuality as it contributes to the construction of children.

### 2.3 Postmodernity

Postmodernity challenged the nature of the afore-mentioned theories. Thinkers in this era suggested that the concept of a singular self, at the heart of social associations, could not be sustained (Woodward 2002). Individuals find themselves in a constant condition of ‘continued construction and reconstruction,’ resulting in the emerging of surplus selves. The singular self disintegrates and the creation of multiple selves ensues. Gergen maintains that this is the era in which fragmentation and incoherence result in persons: individuals exist in ‘a state of continued construction and reconstruction’ Individuals are therefore “uncontrolled, decentred, multiplicated...” (Gergen cited in Steyn and Hay 1999:122). The vulnerability resulting from this notion of the fragmented individual affected a wide range of issues.

#### 2.3.1 The ever-fading division between childhood and adulthood

Statistical figures regarding alcoholism, drug use, sexual activity and crime together with changing perspectives of social institutions, imply an ever-fading division between childhood and adulthood, together with the changing perspectives of social institutions.

Postman suggests that childhood has ‘disappeared’ (Postman 1993). According to him, childhood was brought into being through mass literacy and mass education. Currently, the new media, such as the internet, is undermining the distinction between child and adult. Postman maintains that television has reduced the secrecy and privacy of the home and since secrets no longer exist, childhood has disappeared. All images of the adult world have been exposed and are available to both children and adults (Postman 1993). The television is regarded as “the most widely shared and socially pervasive cultural practice...” (Garnham in Calhoun, Lipuma and Postone 1993:187). This exposure has resulted in a change in how childhood was viewed.

The objectified view, which is characteristic of the modernist child, is now replaced by the notion of subjectivity, whereby children become subjects who discover the truth about themselves (Usher and Edwards cited in Steyn and Hay 1999). The elevation of subjectivity also increases the rate at which things are done by children, or actions are initiated by children. James and Prout maintain that children should be regarded as “social agents in their own right” (cited in Lee 2001). They also argue that children need “to be understood as social actors shaping as well as shaped by their circumstances” (James et al. 1998) and not as “passive absorbers and recipients of socialization” (Lee 2001).

The social component results in children being exposed to diverse and varied contexts and circumstances. These play a major role in the shaping of children’s identity, therefore exposing risk as a crucial component. Beck maintains that individuals have been exposed to numerous environmental and technological risks. He regards postmodernity as living in a “risk society” (1992). Giddens alludes to this and describes the social changes that have occurred in contemporary society as having increased indices of risk and anxiety. At the same time, however, it is within the increased risk situation that opportunities are provided for individuals to construct themselves (Giddens 1992). This construction process demands a higher level of responsibility and agency to be exercised.

The afore-going discussion provided the tenets of a postmodern era. Essential features of this era include the creation of surplus selves, fragmentation and incoherence. In addition to these, the gradual disappearance of childhood seems evident, while the risk and anxiety are on the increase. These features are located within a specified environment which entails not only the geographical space, but also the “socially produced and interpreted nature of space” (Aitchison 2003:70). The

nature of this space provides the context and it is within this context that individuals handle themselves accordingly. In lieu of this, it is essential to pursue a discussion on the complexity of context so that it can be understood, not merely as geographic space, but as a space in which meaning is made, understood and interpreted.

### 2.3.2 Context

According to Dilley, the term context refers to a generalized set of connections which shape the phenomena being investigated. It includes both the geographical and spatial. Context can be described as "...that which environs an object [and] suggests a range of synonyms such as environment, milieu, setting and background" (1999:5).

From the above discussion, it can be deduced that knowledge of context is pivotal to understanding sexual identity construction. Since this study is located in South Africa, a brief overview of the South African context is necessary. This will enable an understanding of the manner in which the South African male and female ascribe to themselves notions of masculinity and femininity.

The political history of South Africa contains and describes the existing dichotomies which exist between the rich and poor. These dichotomies, to a large extent overlap, but do not contain features of both tradition and postmodernism within the country. This dualism is evident in the behaviour which exists within the diverse cultures and groups within South Africa. A wide range of economic, social, cultural and political factors control these extremities.

Masculinity, within the South African context, takes its character from the complex of characteristics which can be traced back to the apartheid and even earlier eras. As a form of power, it took particular forms and manifested itself in negative behavioural patterns such as anger, aggression and abuse. Violence, deep-rooted in the "the apartheid legacy, poverty and massive economic displacement," impacted on the construction of masculinity (Morrell 1998).

Women were the victims of these power forms, often resulting in submissive feminine roles. In South Africa, women were left to fend for themselves and the family while the men would pursue migrant labor. This resulted in them being the nurturers and the caregivers within their families (Walker, Reid, Cornell, Colo 2004). The job market became a masculine space as men left home for their jobs in the cities and the mines leaving women behind to manage, in whatever ways would

help them cope, including using their bodies to make ends meet. The lack of ideal homes and poverty often resulted in sex, and knowledge of sex becoming an important part of many African children's early sexual socialization (Walker et al. 2004).

In the following section children's lore, which is inclusive of various activities in which children are involved, will be discussed as a crucial part of sexual socialization.

Sexual socialization described above became evident in children's lore which includes the games, forms of play, stories that are told, jokes, and so on that they construct for themselves. Play amongst peers and emulating the behaviour of adults, directly impacts on the ways in which they construct their sexuality. It is through play and games that many different aspects of children's lives are explored. Play is seen as a "cultural evaluation of children's social actions in order to engage more directly with the intentions and motives of children as social actors" (James et al. 1998:91). Future adult roles, according to Sutton-Smith (cited in James et al. 1998), are clearly modelled through play. It is through play that it can be focused on how, within children's life course, childhood culture is experienced and sexuality is shaped.

Thorne (cited in James et al. 1998), argues that games, though treated by adults as trivial and easy, disguise the seriousness of the social practice. It is in child's play, she maintains, that social construction of gender occurs, as well as the knowledge of gender difference.

Preadolescent children do not only play organized games, but they also create their own cultural artifacts to organize and share their activities. They construct their own games. Peer interaction in a wide range of social settings reveals 'greater complexity in gender relations' (Corsaro 1997:186), hereby embarking on the terrain of sexuality.

## 2.4 Sexuality

Giddens describes sexuality as a malleable feature of self, a major link and prime connecting part between body, self, identity and social norm (Giddens 1987). This is further supported by Weeks who defines sexuality as an historical construction which brings together a host of different

biological and mental possibilities – gender identity, bodily differences, reproductive capacities, needs, desires and fantasies...” (Weeks 1986:15). McDermott (in Weeks 1986) confirms this definition with his argument that sexuality includes biological, social, cultural, and psychological aspects, which develop in a social context. The development of self therefore does not take place in isolation, instead, it is context-dependant as discussed above.

Within postmodernity, all existing structures and forms of behaviour are subject to deconstruction and sexuality is no exception. Since HIV/AIDS has become an essential part of the existing context, the sexual nature of the disease demands a refocus on the sexuality of the child.

#### 2.4.1 A historical projection of sexuality

Time factor plays an important role in the definition and understanding of sexuality. Sexuality does not exist outside history but is a historical product, with a variety of histories, each to be understood in its uniqueness and as a contributing part of a crucial pattern (Weeks 1986:27). The historical approach to sexuality creates an awareness of the complexity of forces that mould the social and enable us to be aware of the power elements that determine the meanings by which we live (Weeks 1995).

Each era heralds a new perspective on sexuality. It is essential “...to know what it [sexuality] has been and is, before it can be rationally decided what it should, or could, be” (Weeks 1986:12).

Traditionally, sexuality was considered a taboo subject. This era, referred to as the ‘old morality’ by Weeks, regarded sexuality as a forceful and instinctive urge which needed to be controlled (Weeks 1995). In the Middle Ages, for example, the Christian confession served as the central location for the management of sexual discourse. There was a great alarm on the part of priests, themselves supposedly celibate, concerning people’s sexual activities. This discourse focused on the body as corruptible flesh. Priests enquired about people’s intentions and actions, and the locus of sexuality was shifted from the body to the mind of subjects (Foucault 1981:33). The object of the discourse was also extended to power over life and welfare, and so coming to hold implications for fertility, health and illness, diet and a concern with people’s physical habits and customs.

Following these developments, the eighteenth century saw a large increase in ways of discoursing about sexuality, linking, inter alia, the sex of individual bodies to controlling of huge national populations, to psychological states of mind and so on. This manifested itself in the proliferation of terms to 'capture' and understand people's behaviour. Examples of this proliferation became evident in the variety of terms to describe people's behaviour:

- \* the 'hysterical woman' who was limited and defined by her sexuality;
  - \* the 'masturbating child' who was prone to engaging in immoral behaviour;
  - \* the 'Malthusian couple' who were socialized into conceiving children according to the needs of society;
- and the 'perverse adult' whose sexual instincts deviated from the legitimate norm.

(Foucault 1981).

In the modern era, sexuality is described as a phenomenon in which "freedom lies in unfettered sexual expression" (Mills 2003:84). This implies that there are no limitations placed on sexual standards and expression. Foucault strongly feels that modernity is pervasively preoccupied with sex. There is a notion of wanting to track it down, not with the aim of elimination but to re-organise and analyse it (ibid).

Sexuality in the twentieth century has become synonymous with self-identity and lifestyle. The scope of discourse changed from a concern with controlling individual bodies, to regulating the population (Shilling 1993). The 'new' sexuality appears to be in conflict with the 'old' morality since it is now regarded as an emancipated morality where the individual is able to pursue his or her sexual pleasure and even has a creative connotation attached to it. These are legitimate and now sexual desire is encouraged to exist (Elliot 1996). Issues relating to sex and sexuality have become open secrets. Today 'sexuality' has been liberated, opened up and made accessible to the development of diverse life-styles. This unfolding of deep secrets and the tolerance towards sexual pluralism was expressed by Weeks in the following:

There no longer appears to be a great continent of normality surrounded by small islands of disorder. Instead we can now witness clusters of islands, great and small... New categories and erotic minorities have emerged. Older ones have experienced a process of subdivision as specialized tastes, specific aptitudes and needs become the basis for proliferating sexual identities. (Weeks 1986)



A partially successful battle has been won over fights of self expression and the acceptance of sexual deviances. This initial replacement of perversion by pluralism, forms an essential part of the broad based changes to the expansion of modernity. Some of these broad based changes are the secularization of sex which entails the disconnection of sexual values from religious values (Weeks 1986). Sexuality has now become the domain of non-religious and secular experts in sexology, psychology, welfare services, social services and medicine and the widespread liberalization of attitudes.

Issues like birth control, abortion, divorce, pre-marital sex, cohabitation, which in the past were taboo subjects have now been opened up. An explosion of discourses around sexuality and a compulsion to talk about sex illustrate the liberal attitude that presently exists.

This liberalization has fundamentally come to disrupt what was understood as the norm. Relationships, whether they are parental, peer or sexual, have come to be placed at risk. This is particularly so for the child (Weedon 1999).

Modern discourse has therefore ushered in along with it new constructs of sexuality. One of these constructs, which has been underplayed traditionally, is gender.

#### 2.4.2 Constructs of sexuality

Woodward maintains that gender has long been used as a concept to provide a focus for the social construction of femininity and masculinity and the importance of social relations. It included hierarchical divisions between women and men that were based on social, political and economic practices and institutions. Gender was not viewed separately, but was conflated with other social divisions and was distinguished by its social and cultural manifestations. Attempts were made to disentangle gender as a social construct from sex. "Sex was seen as residing in the body and was largely immutable, whereas gender was socially and culturally malleable, changing across time and place"(Woodward 2002). Oakley (cited in Woodward 2001), also defined sex as biological and anatomical and gender as the attributes which were associated with one or other sex in specific societies.

Butler's work on sexual identity, particularly 'performativity' (Butler 1990), contributed strongly to the interpretation of gender as a social construction. She maintains that gender does not follow on

from sex, thus creating the possibility of there being more than two genders. The body, according to Butler, does not have a pre-given and essential sex. It is only through the repeated performance of gender that we become gendered. Transvestites, for example, in their performativity, prove that femininity is not necessarily located in women's bodies nor masculinity in men's (ibid). There is a possibility for a person to form and choose his or her own individual sexual identity. Gender, according to Butler, can be viewed as a fluid variable which shifts and transforms in varied contexts and at varied times. The traditional construct of gender, as a fixed variable is challenged (Butler 1990).

According to Woodward (2002) gender, as an anchor of identity, has been undermined. She maintains that many sociologists regard the body as a mere biological source of certainty. In the tradition of viewing the body as the only tangible manifestation of the person, the body and the mind were regarded as separate. This resulted in a dualistic tradition of thought which regarded the body and mind as demarcations of polar opposites. Gender was regarded as a biological phenomenon. Gender identity 'packages' were imposed on children by all the stakeholders namely, the parents, teachers and society. Even before the birth of the child, people respond to its potential genderedness in a specific way (ibid).

Within the postmodern era, the 'location' of gender seems to have shifted from a given or a purely biological phenomenon to a construction. Gender is now regarded as a socially constructed phenomenon as illustrated above by Butler's work. Biological manifestations of maleness or femaleness are no guarantee that our sexual identities are formed in that way. Binary oppositions or dualisms such as mind/body; soul/body and sex/gender have been deconstructed as separate entities. These notions are not, "expressions of a natural order, but rather discursively produced under specific historical conditions" (Weedon 1999:105).

The duality of gender and sexuality are now viewed, not as a mere biological manifestation, but as a construction, in which social contexts play a vital role. It is within these contexts that sexual construction takes place, hereby making sexuality a key discourse through which identity is developed.

#### 2.4.3 Sexuality within the locus of identity construction

Epstein and Johnson maintain that: “We ...no longer just ‘do’ sexual acts, we are the acts we do, or, perhaps more accurately, the acts we identify with” (1998: 152). It is therefore not necessary to be engaged in sexual relationships, to develop a sexual identity. Since the perceived notion of sexuality has been opened up and become more accessible, the link between children and sexuality has come under severe scrutiny. In order to develop an understanding of the way in which sexuality is perceived in childhood, the context and historical period are important. Sexuality “is always being produced, always changing and internally very diverse” bringing with it a ‘discursive formation’, “...a particular historical combination of discourses or discursive strategies with different histories...” (Epstein and Johnson 1998:16). Young (in Harding 2001:23) alludes to this by saying that “...sexuality has a history, that is, it is inside the contingency of culture, not merely fixed and innate in a stereotyped way.”

Given this review of the sexual identity of childhood, there is an urgent need to understand the formation and challenges of children’s sexual identity construction.

#### 2.4.4 Signifying systems evident in social construction

Williams maintains that the signifying system and manner through which social orders are ‘communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored’ are interpreted as culture (Woodward 2002). He maintains that culture does not merely reflect social processes, but it is constituted of social processes. Formed persons emanate from specific cultural contexts such as the ‘moral order’ which surround them (Stevens 1996). Hall maintains that “culture is the lived practices or practiced ideologies which enable a society, group or class to experience, define, interpret and make sense of its conditions of existence” (in Woodward 2002:77).

Sexual identity formation is strongly located in social constructions which are inscribed through social orders. Brah (in Weedon 2000:129) maintains that “Questions of identity are intimately connected with those of experience ...and social relations”. Identities are inscribed through experiences, subjectivity and social relations”(ibid). Experiences are determined by the social relations and interaction with family, peers, media, class and religion which all play a major role in the determination of identity formation. A brief overview will be given of each of these crucial contributory factors. The family, the media and embodiment are all major contributory factors to the sexual identity construction of children.

“The family means many things to many people, but in its essence it refers to those socially patterned ideals and practices...” (Kelly cited in Garbarino 1992). Contemporary patterns of social forms challenge traditional forms since cohabitation, single-parent families are replacing the previously accepted norm of two-parent families. This is but one of the factors influencing the social contribution of sexuality (Garbarino 1992).

Epstein and Johnson maintain that it is in the family, in the axis of parent-child and not only the husband-wife axis, where an essential part of the social construction of sexuality takes place. “Family is not only a place where sexuality is to be controlled or rendered safe or holy: it does not repress or restrain modern sexualities merely; rather it produces them” (1998:35). The family also experiences and bears the weight of sexual issues of children. The manner in which the family affects this process of construction, ties in with the notion of cultural capital theory as proposed by Bourdieu. His idea of ‘cultural capital’ helps to explain why different returns of investment could be expected from different class groups (Shilling 1993). The three forms of cultural capital are the institutionalized state, the objectified state and the embodied state. One form which is relevant to this aspect of the discussion, is the objectified state. Within the objectified state of cultural capital, the media forms the trace and realization of theories and bodies of knowledge (Bourdieu in Shilling 1993). The media i.e. television, magazines, video games, books etc. have become likely sources of eliciting knowledge which, as Jenks explains “prematurely ages children’s minds, may run counter to more liberal or, indeed, more informed claims...” (1996:134).

The long-lasting dispositions of the body and mind, form the embodied state which is also referred to as physical capital by Bourdieu (in Shilling 1993). By refocusing on the material bodies of children, childhood, according to James et al., (1998:147), could be explored as “both a construct of discourse and an aspect of children’s lives which shapes social relations as much as it is shaped by them.” They maintain that it is essential to understand embodiment as it is through this means that participation in social life is made possible. Csordas (1994) regards the body as “... the original tool with which humans shape their world and substance out of which the world is shaped.”

Bourdieu (1977) explains how body habits bring about cultural characteristics and social structure. He refers to “habitus”, the Latin term, to characterize the way in which the body, mind and emotions are simultaneously trained. Calhoun et al., describe the habitus as “...the dynamic

intersection of structure and action, society and the individual” (1993:4). Mediation occurs between the power of social fields, which could be sexuality, fashion, diet, etc., and the creativity of individual action. Production of habitus occurs through the body, resulting in both shaping and being shaped by the structure of the social fields (Shilling 1993).

James et al. (1998) further maintain that discourse on sex shifted from the individual’s body, to the reproductive fitness of the social body. Embodiment, therefore appears to be an essential aspect and the central issue to becoming a person. The body serves as the means through which skills are exercised for interaction with others. An essential aspect which is being underlined by social constructionism is that “social action is embodied action, performed not only by texts but by real, living corporeal persons” (Csordas 2004:12). The nature of the embodiment of modern children is theorized by accounting for how these children experience their bodies. James et al. (1998) used the lived worlds of children to illustrate the body as an experienced entity. The body is viewed by her as being saturated with symbolic significance, hereby strongly influencing and affecting how children create their sexual identities. James et al. (1998) maintain that during childhood, crucial aspects of habitus embodiment occur. This implies that children at birth, experience class difference through their bodies, hereby allowing for the embodiment of social status and class position. Bourdieu (cited in Corsaro 1997:11), further maintains that ‘habitus’ is infused in early socialization and appears in the inclination of children to maintain their sense of self and place in the world.

Issues of bodily differences within home and school are focused on. These serve as important signifiers for the construction of social identity.

Foucault explains this set of indicators as a system of advanced procedures for the production and operation of statements. This procedure is encapsulated within the term ‘discourse’ (Foucault 1974). As in the description of habitus, its constituents are knowledge, attitudes and values which are manifested through actions. Children are enfolded within this realm of discourse or habitus which encompasses and orders their behaviour, actions and thoughts, hereby shaping character, and identity whether it be socially, sexually or culturally. As Shilling (1993:75) states, “... discourses, ... had a profound effect on the construction of individuals.”

Children are surrounded by a myriad of ways in which knowledge is represented within a specific manner. These are the discourses through which meanings are made and these shape and influence the eventual outcome. As the children are placed in a discourse, new meanings emanate. It is within this discourse that they act out and see things within a specific way. All the ways in which knowledge is represented at a specified time and 'since all social practices entail meaning and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect' (Hall 1992:291). He therefore maintains that each practice provides meaning and it is this meaning that strongly influences behaviour. It is through discourses that meanings are made.

## 2.5 Empirical studies

I have perused studies relating to children and sexuality. These studies have been placed in the following categories

- \* Children and sexual identity
- \* Children and gender
- \* Children and sexual activity
- \* Children and HIV/AIDS

I have reviewed the studies by describing each one respectively, presenting the major findings and stating the sample used.

### 2.5.1 Children and sexual identity

Kelley, Buckingham and Davies (1999) have researched how the media affect children's sexual identity and attitude. They considered how 10/11 and 6/7 year old, English children interpreted and responded to the representations of sexual behaviour they encountered on television, in genres such as soap operas, dating game shows, etc. They further investigated how issues in these programmes aided the child in the formation of sexual identity. The following issues were dealt with: access to television programmes, dating games and gender suitability of programmes, teasing and discussions around sex and romance. The methods of data collection were open-ended discussions followed by focus group activities. The findings were that the younger children were more affected by the images portrayed by the media, as well as the bad language and sex. They regarded films with sexual themes as 'disgusting' or 'rude'. The older children responded in a more mature way.

Some used their knowledge of sex on television to demonstrate their 'adulthood', while others drew on adult discourses concerned with the supposed 'effects' of television, and the need to protect 'children' from images of sex or bad language.

Another study which reveals how children could draw on adult discourses concerning identity, was undertaken by Bhana (2003). She titled her research study: "Children are children: gender doesn't matter." Bhana focused on how everyday teaching practices influenced the gendering of children's identities. Bhana interviewed teachers from four different primary schools in Durban. This study revealed that teaching discourses within the institution of education, impacted on the identities of learners. These teaching discourses often served to perpetuate the minor status of the young learner. This was then in turn used as a site of power which impacted upon and shaped the identity of young learners. "Teaching discourses make children innocent; construct them as unsexed, unprotesting, passive and without agency" (Bhana 2003).

#### 2.5.2 Children and gender differences

Halstead and Waite (2001), in England investigated the distinct differences between male and female learners. They investigated sexual values, style of discussion, body changes, attitudes to opposite sex and other pertinent issues. The findings revealed that there were distinct differences between the different genders as regards to each of the above-mentioned issues. Differences were determined by the context in which the children found themselves. Situational and relational contexts impacted strongly on identities and personalities. A specific finding was that the family seemed to be the main provider of sexual information for girls, whereas the boys relied on friends, television, videos and magazines for their sexual information. It also seemed that girls attached more value to family than boys.

Thorne (cited in James et al., 1998) investigated borderwork, which referred to activities that mark and strengthen boundaries between girls and boys. She identified several types of borderwork. A strong dichotomy existed between boys and girls at play. This always resulted in contests. It was found that taunts which lead to chases, were accompanied by threats. Boys had power and dominance over girls and they would deliberately disrupt activities of groups of girls. Boys invaded girls' spaces. The results were that boys were frequently the aggressors. They controlled

more space and seemed not to suffer from any negative implications which resulted from engaging in such actions.

### 2.5.3 Children and sexual activity

Kelly and Ntlabati (2002) have studied and researched the early patterns of early sexual activity in early adolescence in six sites in South Africa. The ultimate aim of the study was to discover the ways in which the sexual debut occurs within changing social contexts, such as the presence of HIV/AIDS for example, so that proper interventions can be pursued. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were specifically held on the issue of sexual debut. The findings were that, due to the sexual games being part of a culture, sex was experienced at a very young age. It was also found that there were a range of influences which mediated early sexual experiences. Inter-site differences resulted in each site having its own dynamics.

In seeking to understand sexual debut, they noted that changes in a range of other aspects of social life are also affected. These include management of space in the household, sexual instruction, courtship practices, social meeting practices, and interactions between men and women in public. The parental mediation of sexual enculturation has been reduced.

### 2.5.4 Children and HIV/AIDS

Booyesen and Arntz (2002) explored the impact of HIV/AIDS on children. This study was undertaken in the Free State in South Africa. The sample consisted of households in two South African communities. Issues like children being passed on from one household to another, government's initiative to roll out child support grants, home-based care, improved access to education and health care, were addressed within this study. Poverty and destitution and the non-attendance at school among children were low and disconcerting. Children were passed from one household to another. The family situation had now affected the child's source of information, protection and security. Children appeared to be more free and unrestricted. These factors had a major impact on the sexual identities of children and resulted in children experimenting and experiencing things in a different way which affected the patterns of early sexuality.

From the above-mentioned studies, it can be deduced:



- that the media and teaching discourses influence children's sexual identities
- there is a distinct difference in attitude between males and females
- HIV/AIDS has a direct impact on children
- the sexual activity of children impacted on other crucial issues.

These studies have helped to enhance my study as it pertains to the shaping of children's sexual identities. Notwithstanding the fact that all the above studies partially reveal children's sexual identity construction, a paucity of work still exists concerning the definite ways in which sexual identities are constructed and how various social practices impact on this process. Hence the need for this particular research study.

Throughout this literature review various aspects of identity and sexual identity construction have been examined as they were perceived through the traditional, modern and postmodern eras. The historical trajectory of childhood development illustrated that children were initially regarded as unitary and biological. It was later perceived that children became more active and participatory in the process of sexual identity construction. The social theorists' perspectives and the broad social fields, which directly impact on this shaping process, were addressed.

The review then sought to show that it is through deconstructing previous conceptions of childhood development and identity formation, that we now are able to view the parameters in which the current, postmodern perceptions of sexual identity formations are constructed. The features of postmodernity, as regards the ever-fading division of childhood, together with sexuality issues subsumed in masculinity and femininity, and the implementation of children's lore, were then discussed. The chapter concludes with a review of studies which were undertaken concerning relevant issues relating to childhood in South Africa and abroad.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter lays out the research plan of action for the study and as such describes the methodological framework, the methods of data collection, the site and sample, as well as a discussion on the process of data analysis and ethical considerations. The chapter also briefly considers the challenges of working with children and looks specifically at the sensitivities around childhood and sexuality.

### 3.1 METHODOLOGY

As the study was aimed at investigating how sexual identities are constructed and reconstructed by intermediate phase children, a design had to be selected whereby the 'subjective experience and perspective of the child' takes priority (Greig and Taylor 1999). A qualitative approach to the study therefore proved most appropriate since this approach pays particular attention to people's responses and experiences within a naturalistic context. Within this paradigm, human action is viewed from the point of view of the social participants themselves and their specific reaction or responses to a social phenomenon of which they are participants (Babbie and Mouton 2001). Qualitative research approaches also enabled me to investigate the children's own understanding of the specific issue at hand since it is by "interviewing children directly that we can understand children's social worlds" (Scott cited in Pia and Allison 2000:115).

A phenomenological approach was used within this paradigm. Babbie et al. maintain that human consciousness is the nucleus around which this paradigm is located. Since the social phenomenon, of human sexuality, was researched, this approach seemed most appropriate. Phenomenology emphasizes that people are conscious beings who continually reason and logically find reason for their life worlds. In this process a 'continuous constructing' occurs. (Babbie, Mouton and 2001).

## 3.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Two issues were pertinent in selecting data collection tools for the study. The first related to the sensitivity of the topic and the second concerned working with children as respondents.

### 3.2.1 Sensitivity of the topic

With regard to the former, in the main, sexuality is regarded as a sensitive topic. According to Sieber and Stanley (cited in Lee, 1993) topics, like sexuality, entail “studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research,” and are also referred to as socially defined research. Farebow (cited in Lee 1993) maintains that in addition to the above definition, sensitive topics are also those areas of social life usually constrained by taboo. Taboo implies those topics which strongly appeal to the emotions, or topics which are not comfortably spoken of in everyday social life.

### 3.2.2 Working with children

In order to work with children many obstacles had to be overcome. Permission had to be obtained from parents as children are regarded as minors. This implied that, despite the children's willingness to participate, without their parents' permission they would not have been able to participate. Language barriers and modes of expression were often problematic since children were not always able to express themselves eloquently. Understanding their perspectives posed a challenge. This was overcome by asking them to repeat and by stating questions simply. Literary problems were overcome by recording what had been discussed instead of letting the children write down the responses.

Generational issues also complicated the process of working with children. Children regarded me as an adult and as such it was a long and difficult process to convince them ‘that it's okay’ (Mayall cited in Pia and Allison 2000:122). This was addressed by having ice-breakers prior to the focus-group discussions.

The emotional state of children often affected their immediate response. This was aggravated by the fact that many of them came from dysfunctional backgrounds where their situations differed on a daily basis.

The considerations above formed the framework for the selection of data collection tools. In order to elicit diverse constructions of reality that exist and capture “shifting realities of ... participants” (Greig and Taylor 1999), as well as improve the validity of my research, different data collection tools were used. The tools which I implemented had to also reflect words and action while also encapsulating language and behaviour. As such, four forms of data collection were employed. These included observations, questionnaires, focus group discussions and individual interviews. When multiple forms of data collection are used, credibility and trustworthiness need to be ensured through the process of triangulation. In social research, as explained by Neuman (2000: 141), triangulation means “using different types of measures, or data collection techniques, in order to examine the same variable.” Denzin (in Babbie et al. 2001) further explains that triangulation entails the combination of various methods of data collection to prevent personal bias which could originate from single methodologies. It is a method used to “clarify the notion of objectivity” (in Babbie et al. 2001). What follows is a detailed description of each data collection tool.

### 3.2.3 Participant Observation

Neuman suggests that “...the core of social life is communicated through the mundane, trivial, everyday minutia” (2000: 361). These ‘minutia’ were crucial and I was able to capture various features of social life through the observation process of which I became a participant.

Detailed field-notes were kept of the observation period. According to Fetterman field notes are the “...bricks and mortar of field research” (cited in Neuman 2000). Since it was difficult to write detailed notes while observing, I jotted down important aspects that I later described in detail once I left each site of observation.

Observation of the children in their immediate environment at school took two forms. I observed them in the classroom as well as on the playground. Since I was interested in sexual identity construction, I observed children during specific Life Orientation sessions. I did this by paying attention to teacher/learner and learner/learner interaction. I also observed how the teacher responded to the different genders, who were asked questions, how children reacted to the content

of the lesson, how the teacher handled sensitive content and how children interacted amongst themselves during these sessions. Observation took place during school sessions for a period of one week prior to my active involvement in other data collection means.

In addition to the above, I observed children on the playground during intervals throughout my stay at each specific school. During such periods close attention was paid to how children occupied their free time and how they interacted amongst themselves.

#### 3.2.4 Questionnaire Survey

Designing questionnaires requires the researcher to obtain information from people, and is of “most value when used in tandem with other methods” (Gillham 2000:1-2). Questionnaires are comprised of questions which enable the researcher to access specific data. The specific data or information is obtained by asking closed or open questions. Closed questions are controlled by predetermined possible answers whereas the open questions allow the respondent to answer the question broadly providing possible motivation and reasons.

The questionnaires used in this research project consisted of short, closed-ended questions which were set in such a manner as to ensure simple and unambiguous answers. Two questionnaire surveys were used. The first questionnaire was used to access the biographical details of each participating learner. This questionnaire consisted of seventeen questions which included questions relating to family background, parental status, home environment and economic status. The second questionnaire focused on eliciting responses regarding knowledge about HIV/AIDS from children. The results of these two questionnaires were used as a selection tool rather as well as part of the main findings and analysis.

#### 3.2.5 Focus Groups

Focus groups are discussions within group settings which relate to a specific topic. It is a focused and specific collective activity, which encourages interaction between individuals and enables data generation to occur. Since sexuality is a sensitive topic, I ensured that the group provided support for each other. This enabled me to steer the discussion, then allow the children “spark each other off” (Gillham 2000:20).

The space provided within the focus group, encouraged children to relate more easily to each other, expressing their personal views and opinions. Those within groups were encouraged to interact, comment on and pose questions to one another (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999). This means enabled children to communicate and discuss the issue at hand with each other. This was an ideal opportunity for me, as researcher, to explore the children's experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns. It was also invaluable to be able to examine how knowledge, ideas and self-presentation operated within a given cultural context. The children's perspectives as they operated within a social network were revealed (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999). Children received clear explanations of the aim of the research and the purpose of the exercise.

These focus groups consisted of both boys and girls. Eight to twelve children participated in each focus group discussion. To initiate discussion, each group was provided with a variety of stimuli. The first included a vignette about how they would respond to HIV-positive children and what their general attitudes might be towards those infected with the virus. In addition, information from the questionnaire was used to elicit further discussion about issues relating to chores, activities they engaged in and parental influences on the type of activities they were allowed to participate in. In this regard, scenarios were provided as a lead and children were then asked to respond. My role as interviewer, within the focus group discussion setting, was to ensure productive peer interaction for everyone present. Throughout the discussion, I merely facilitated the discussion as I encouraged children to interact with each other (Greig and Taylor 1999).

The focus group served as a filter for selecting individual children to participate in the interview as this was ideal means to determine suitable respondents.

### 3.2.6 Interviews

Interviews, according to Neuman (2000:274), are social relationships which involve "...roles, norms and expectations. The interview is a short-term, secondary social interaction between two strangers with the explicit purpose of one person's obtaining specific information from the other." For the purposes of this research, qualitative phenomenological interviews were used, which, according to Bruce (1994), is an in-depth interview to investigate the reason for specific experiences as expressed by the respondent. A specific phenomenon is placed under scrutiny and discussed in detail.

A semi-structured interview schedule guide was followed and questions were completely open-ended as to ensure that there was a conversational rather than an interrogative tone. The open-ended questions provided an ideal opportunity for probing. A characteristic of this method, as Moustakas (1994) suggests, is the long interview between the interviewee and the respondent with the aim of understanding the respondent's viewpoint on their experiences. The focus group discussion lasted for approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. This was not a fixed time since there were instances when discussions had to be suspended due to the school programme. This is further discussed as a limitation.

Five children, from each focus group, were interviewed individually. These interviews were carried out to provide the most vocal and the least vocal child with an added opportunity to contribute. The least vocal sample could raise their personal views within a private space while the most vocal sample could then further motivate their opinions and provide a spontaneous discussion.

This data collection tool of interviewing allowed me to access dimensions of information which are otherwise not available, like non-verbal cues on feelings. The free-flow interaction enabled me to notice and seek elaboration on important and emotive issues by gentle probing (Greig and Taylor 1998). The interviews also provided both the children and educators with an ample opportunity to talk and this process was a powerful and dynamic means of understanding relationships, determining attitudes and investigating knowledge (Pilcher and Coffey, 1996:2). Each individual interview lasted fifteen to thirty minutes. The time spent with each child was dependant on the co-operation of the child concerned.

### 3.3. SITE

This research is part of a larger project that focuses on "Schooling, Cultural Values and HIV/AIDS". Application was made by the principal investigator to the Western Cape Department of Education for access to conduct research in some primary schools. Once permission was granted, schools were pre-selected through purposive sampling by the principal researcher. According to Neuman (2000), purposive sampling entails the use of judgement by the researcher in the selection of sites with a specific purpose in mind. Since the large project was interested in investigating specific topics within particular contexts and might provide for a variety of experiences and differing influences, this form of purposive sampling seemed most appropriate.

The following process was following in the selection of schools. The principal investigator together with a research assistant categorized all primary schools within the Cape Metropolitan area into the four ex-Departments of Education which were: White Schools-House of Assembly, Indian Schools - House of Delegates, Coloured Schools - House of Representatives, Black Schools - Department of Education and Training. These were essential since different contexts, different social and cultural practices and different communities could be observed. Every school within each group was numbered and placed in one of four boxes. Schools from each group were then randomly selected through drawing a number from each of the boxes. One exception included that of the ex-Department of Training and development from which two schools were drawn. A total of five primary schools consequently formed the sites in which all project research was conducted.

Once schools were selected, I was able to contact schools to inform them of my specific project, its purpose and focus. All five schools were visited to establish personal introductions and to also consolidate the aim and confirm procedures to be followed in conducting the research. Times and dates for visits to each of the five schools were finalized and each school was provided with a schedule. Having a comprehensive plan of action facilitated the smooth running of the research process and ensured that there was minimal disruption to the school program.

### 3.4 SAMPLE

#### 3.4.1 Grade and Class Sample

At each school there was more than one Grade 5 class. Since principals and educators were concerned about disruption of classes, I was therefore allocated one Grade 5 class per school. Once I had an indication of the class and since my study focused on examining sexual identity construction amongst Grade 5 children in these schools, it was necessary for me to gain permission from the participants' parents. Letters to obtain permission were issued. Parents were asked to grant permission in writing for their children's participation in this project.

#### 3.4.2 Learner Sample

The learner sample in each school was developed in the following way:

- Survey Sample - The entire class
- Focus Group Sample - 8-12 children



- Individual Interviews – 4 children

### 3.4.3 Survey Sample

The sample survey consisted of the entire class, which consisted of 25 to 36 learners. Questionnaires were completed. The results obtained from these, were used as a basis for sampling for focus and individual interviews.

### 3.4.4 Focus Group Sampling

The results from the questionnaire were used as a guide in the selection of between eight to twelve children from each of the five designated classes for the focus group interviews. Consideration was given to the manner in which they responded to the variables of parental status, home environment, economic status, etc.

### 3.4.5 Individual Interviews

Five children from each focus group were selected for individual interviewing. In selecting those for interviews, consideration was given as to how children responded in the focus group discussions. I therefore selected children who were most and least vocal, as well as those children who were spontaneous in their responses.

## 3.5 Ethics

As a researcher, involvement relating to the social lives of people, raised a variety of ethical dilemmas which had to be addressed, since the main subjects involved human subjects who were vulnerable to hurt, damage and harm. Ethical consideration was hence given to the ethical dilemmas namely anonymity and confidentiality (Mason 1996).

All participants within the study were alerted that the researcher was bound by the code of ethics which strongly addresses issues of confidentiality, respecting privacy and obtaining parental consent for respondents who were under the age of eighteen.

- i) Letters of permission were issued to parents, well in advance, and no research continued unless permission was granted.
- ii) Since I was aware of the intimate knowledge which could be obtained through the procedure of enquiry, the confidentiality of data was preserved. On the issue of confidentiality, I realized that focus groups participants could not be given an absolute guarantee that matters would be treated with utmost confidentiality within the group. This problem was accentuated by the natural temptation of peers to gossip among each other, especially if they were part of the same social network. Before starting a focus group session, a game was played to demonstrate and then ensure confidentiality among the group participants. The disclosure of potentially sensitive material can have serious methodological implications. Power imbalances within children's peer groups needed to be considered, since group discussions, as stated by Barbour and Kitzinger (1999:31), "...are potentially a particularly exploitative method, in which participants are not only persuaded by skilled facilitators to disclose intimate views, but also to do this in front of peers with whom they have to interact long after the research has finished."
- iii) Anonymity was strongly emphasized. All participants were assured that any information obtained will solely be utilized for the purposes of research (Neuman 2000). "Anonymity protects the privacy of those studied" (Lee 1993:185). Pseudonyms and coded information will be used.

These ethical issues were addressed by setting ground rules prior to the group discussion, through debriefing and providing literature after discussions. Where the disclosure of particularly life-threatening information occurred, I assumed the responsibilities of an adult and not that of a researcher. This implied negotiating with the learner relating to assistance from another party, e.g teacher.

Collaborative relationships were being entered into by myself, as researcher, with a group of children. A vehicle was provided for them to voice their concern and aspirations. Within this relationship, however, tensions and pressures could certainly have originated (Lee 1993). It was therefore of paramount importance that a collaborative relationship be found, specifically since this study was within the context of HIV/AIDS.

I surely realized that substantial demands were placed on me, as researcher, in choosing this sensitive topic. I, therefore, applied the required skill and imagination to overcome the problems which arose and viewed this aspect of the research as a challenging one and not as a “daunting enterprise” (Lee 1993:210).

### 3.6 Data analysis process

The data analysis process entails the methods employed to help organize and ‘get a handle’ on the data enabling comparisons to be made and explanations to be constructed in a particular way (Mason 1996:171).

Data was analysed according to possible categories and themes that emerged from the data thus adhering to the inductive reasoning method (Babbie et al., 2001).

Analysis was on-going throughout the period of data collection since a variety of tools were being implemented. A brief description will now be given regarding the analysis process of each data collection tool.

#### 3.6.1 Questionnaire surveys

Questionnaires were used as part of a multi-method approach. The closed-ended questions mainly dealt with ‘categorical data’ which enabled me to discover more definite information regarding the differences that appear between different categories (Gillham 2000). These categories were the occupations of parents, descriptions of homes and HIV knowledge. This data was entered on a contingency table so that a complete overview could be observed hereby strongly emphasizing the differences (ibid).

### 3.6.2 Fieldnotes

These were filed in order to easily retrieve them.

### 3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions

With regard to focus group discussions and interviews, analysis involved the recording hereof either on video or on audio-tape. These recordings were transcribed and photocopied. Data was analysed inductively and begun with an “immersion in the natural setting” (Babbie et al. 2000), which provides a description of events as they occur and then proceed to a theory which will explain the observation. Themes therefore emerged from data which had been collected. Categories were described by using verbatim data from the interview transcripts to demonstrate their meaning and response (Greig and Taylor 1999).

## 3.7 Limitations of the study

Since this qualitative study focused on children’s identity construction, it sought to understand the phenomenon in an in-depth way. The sample selected for the study, it is conceded, is relatively small when compared to the large number of primary schools that exist in South Africa. A larger sample would have allowed for more justification as regards the analysis of the results.

Another limitation was the reluctance of some children to reveal their true emotions and experiences. Some children regarded this disclosure as threatening, and the discussion on sexuality too personal.

The time periods provided for focus-group discussions or interviews, at certain schools, could not always be adhered to, due to interruptions within the school day. These interferences impacted on the outcome of the discussion, since it was not easy to gain a similar momentum.

The language barrier in certain schools limited the childrens’ freedom to discuss vital information. When this was experienced, an interpreter was used. Fortunately, the manner in which the interpreter went about explaining was dynamic, and, as a result, the children participated quite easily. I experienced a complete change in their level of participation. What might have impeded

the discussions, since the respondents now had to contend with an additional person present, was turned to the advantage of the research process.

Parents' prejudices and conservative attitudes also impacted on the granting of permission. At one of the five schools, only a small number of parents agreed to their children participating in this research project.

At some schools the research schedule disrupted the school program, as interviews and discussions needed to occur within school time. This resulted in inconvenience and possible interferences in the continuity of this study.

As researcher, I was regarded by some children as a stranger. This impacted on their freedom to reveal information. This limitation was overcome by initially trying to gain their confidence by having informal conversations with them.

People express themselves not only linguistically, but also para-linguistically involving the use of gesture, tone of voice, looking or not looking up, etc. (Triandis, 1994). As a researcher, it was thus essential to have prior knowledge of cross-cultural notions. A lack of this knowledge might have lead to the misinterpretation of information or inadvertently offending the respondent during an interview.

## CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The data collection means and various strategies employed, have enabled me to present the following findings.

This study was aimed at examining the sexual identity construction of Grade 5 children in some schools in the Western Cape. In particular, I was interested in gaining some understanding of the social practices that shape the children's sexual identity construction. I also paid attention to how these social practices shape their sexual identity construction.

In this chapter, I present my research findings in two parts. The first section provides a contextual description of the schools obtained from questionnaire data and field notes. Using the field notes, I was able to develop contextual descriptions of the schools. These descriptions included a commentary of the socio-economic status of the community in which the schools were located, the racial demographics of the children, and some observations on the schools' profiles. These descriptions provided a broad framework for understanding the contexts of the respondents. I have not, however, made specific claims or attempted to account for all the nuances that may have been apparent in each site.

The second section consists of the presentation of the main findings which were presented within themes and categories that emerged through the analysis of the focus group discussions, individual interviews and field note data. The themes are presented as follows:

### 4.1 Games Children Play

#### 4.1.1 Nature of games and activities

- Gendered nature
- Sexual advances within games

#### 4.1.2 Rule-constructing Dispositions

### 4.2 Chores in and out of school

#### 4.2.1 Positioning in social spaces

Domestic

School environment

### 4.3 Family, significant others and sexual identity

4.3.1 Influence through parents and siblings

4.3.2 Influence through communication

### 4.4 Media and sexual identity

4.4.1 The role of television on sexual identity

### 4.5 Transcending the boundaries

4.5.1 Complex sexualities vs religious implications

The above provides an explanation of the emerging themes from the data collected which were portrayed in the games that the children played and the chores they were expected to perform in and out of school. In addition to this, there was a brief investigation into their family lives and how they transcended their individual sexual boundaries. These themes enabled me to understand the ways in which these children constructed their sexual identities.

## Section A: Contextual Description

This section describes the socio-economic status, parent education background, and racial demographics profile of the five sites of data collection. It also includes a commentary of the learner population as well as interesting observations made during the research period. A letter designation, example MH, is used to denote each site.

Site RP

Site MP

Site SP

Site LP

Site KP

School RP is situated in a well established suburb in the Western Cape. Historically, the school catered for English-speaking white South Africans. It is situated in a leafy suburb and is surrounded by large free-standing homes. The suburb is conveniently situated to ensure easy access to amenities such as shops, hospitals, the university and many historical buildings and nature reserves.

More recently, this school has changed its demographic profile and now accommodates children from outside the immediate environment of the school. The school population now consists of a diverse racial profile, including black, white and coloured children. Of the 27 children in the class, 11 were from the immediate surrounding and 16 travelled from neighbouring areas within the southern suburbs. The school also attracts children from other countries.

Twenty of the respondents' fathers have professional careers, like teachers, doctors and lawyers. Fathers of the remaining seven held one of the following jobs: maintenance technician, owner of a vodacom shop, managers, factory worker and a student.

Long queues at the tuckshop suggested that these children have money. Lunch packages were filled with delicacies, in addition to sandwiches.

During observations, which were conducted during the summer months, all children at this particular school were always immaculately dressed in their school uniforms which even included a sunhat. It was interesting to see how the uniform created sameness and in a sense minimised differences amongst children. While walking around on the playground and during observations in the classroom, what struck me was how sameness was created through the way children spoke, all with very similar accents and intonations.

Children regularly paid school fees.

This brief profile therefore suggests that this school attracts children from mostly middle-class socio-economic environments.

#### Site MP

School MP is situated in a suburb which has numerous smaller suburban extensions. This differentiation is determined by the structure and kind of housing which is a strong feature of the



suburb concerned. This school is situated on the outskirts of the main suburb. The area is made up of two-bedroomed, similar structured homes with a mainly coloured population. Twenty-two of the 39 respondents live in the immediate area in which the school is located. Five live in the neighbouring suburbs and 12 children live in the black township. Opposite the school there is a huge shopping complex. Many shops in this complex offer sponsorships which are optimally used by the school.

In school MP only one of the respondents' fathers' held a professional career. The remaining 37 were either skilled workers or shop assistants. Jobs ranged from carpentry to building contracting. It was witnessed that children often shared lunch and there were strong differences among the children in class, pertaining to accessibility of finances. Most children appeared neatly attired. However, some also seemed extremely untidy and unkempt.

Children in this area appear to be involved in a variety of activities. While television-viewing is mentioned by many as a highlight, games and activities often take place in the road and the parks. Creative games consist of those that were played, as well as new games which were enjoyed amongst each other. These games included traditional community games such as Abba, Spin the bottle, and Wrestling. Other games were the more common types such as soccer, netball, hide and seek and tag games. The children's hobbies mainly consisted of modelling, sport, wrestling, watching television, playing television games, reading and listening to music.

#### Site SP

School SP is located in a relatively large, area in which a wide range of religions and ways of life is evident. Religions include Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and others. While the area is predominantly Indian, it also has a fair representation of Christian and Muslim coloured people, resulting in the area being culturally diverse. There are only a few blacks within the school. Interestingly, one educator at the school is black while the majority are Indian. Within this one area there are a wide range of houses which range from what are called economic-homes, flats, semi-detached and free standing luxury homes. The school attracts children from the immediate vicinity. Eight of the thirteen respondents live in the area while five of them live in the surrounding areas of this particular suburb. By speaking to children and overhearing conversations there appears to be a diverse group as regards finance. Deducing from children's attire, conversations and attitude, it appeared that a large number of the children in this particular class were poor.

In school SP one of the respondents' father had a professional career. The remaining twelve were managers, clerks, shop assistants, sales representatives and security directors. Many of these parents worked shifts which resulted in various aspects of their lives being affected.

#### Site KP

School KP is situated in a black residential area which consists of both a township and an informal settlement on the outskirts of Cape Town. The informal settlement has numerous informal dwellings, mainly constituted of wood and iron, while the township is made up of a wide range of houses which are mainly semi-detached while others are free-standing. The suburb is divided into sites which enable those living there to locate themselves. The school is situated in an area within the township in which there are small semi-detached homes. Twenty-two of the 34 respondents live in the township while twelve established themselves in informal settlements. Eight of the respondents do not have direct access to running water and only one respondent had no access to electricity.

When viewing the school and the children, it was evident that it was situated within one of the poorer areas. The main entrance of the school is unkempt and the main office consists of only the bare essentials. Classrooms there only have the most essential equipment, namely desks, chairs and a teacher's table. Children were neatly attired.

#### Site LP

School LP is situated in the southern suburbs of Cape Town and is located close to a sewerage site. The area is mainly occupied by black people. The houses are either arranged in continuous rows or are semi-detached. A large percentage of children in the school do not have the necessary attire due to a lack of money. Books are carried in plastic bags and often stationery is handed out in class. Many children even looked hungry and worn out when arriving at school. Classrooms have steel doors and only consist of the minimal furniture. The foyer appeared to be extremely bare and impersonal.

In school LP, out of the 42 respondents, only one of the children's father had a professional career. The rest held positions such as shoemakers, shop assistants, mine workers, maintenance workers, bakers and painters.

Very few children had pre-packed lunches. It was observed, however, that those who brought lunch were willingly sharing it with others around them. Their free time at home was occupied by mainly listening to the radio and watching television, playing ball-games, cooking and cleaning.

The above provides a description of the geographic location, the demographic profile, the learner population, the parental status and the economic position of the sites where data was collected. It is against this background that the main findings can now, hopefully, be more clearly understood in my quest to unravel the ways in which the children, at these above-mentioned sites, shape their sexual identities.

## Section B: Main Findings

In this section I present the main findings that emanated from the study.

The themes as they relate to games, chores, significant others, media and boundaries as described above, are discussed in this section.

### 4.1 Games Children Play

Games are one way in which children make sense of their everyday lives. This activity serves as a conduit for developing and understanding social relations within communities, between adults and children and amongst children themselves. In some instances games reflect community values, can be a commentary on community beliefs and values and seem to offer a 'non-threatening' (away from formal intervention by adults) space where children 'act out' what they experience in the community in which they live. By implication, games may be perceived as the space in which children make sense of their sexual selves overtly or implicitly. As the data below illustrates, within this social practice, children seem to develop an understanding of what is and is not allowed; who is and is not allowed to speak, do, act and the conditions under which these operate. In terms of the argument developed in Chapter Two of the study, one might argue that it is here that children 'learn the rules of the game.' This data provides an understanding of where and under what conditions the sexual self is shaped, hereby providing some insight of the degree to which context, as a discursive space, affects this process.

#### 4.1.1 Nature of games and activities

Although the playing of games is intrinsic to childhood, there are factors which strongly influence the nature of the games that children play. These factors include the different socio-economic environments in which they find themselves, their gender and the sexual connotations evident in most games.

Different socio-economic environments influence the type and nature of games that are played. Access to money influenced not only the games the children played, but the nature of their activities. It appeared that self-invented games and traditional games, games that had been played throughout generations, were mainly played in poorer geographic locations. These games were common in poorer areas. Within such environments children, it would seem, were often more creative in the formulation or modification of games. Their socio-economic circumstances forced them to be innovative. In addition to the socio-economic factors, games invariably impact on the way in which girls and boys view and position themselves. Since male and female children attended each of the schools described above, it appeared that the manner in which they interacted impacted strongly on their individual construction of their sexual identity. Throughout the discussion of games, the boy-girl relations are demonstrated as social interaction occurs among children. These relations among children therefore lead to behaviour which implicitly and explicitly reveals the sexual connotations attached to it.

In the focus group discussions in the Schools MP, SP, KP and LP, my sample of children stated that they played games that included abba, poppiehuis, and spin the bottle. Explanations of these games are provided by the respondents as the discussion progresses. These children, who were coloured and black children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, as discussed in the contextual description. At school MP, the black and coloured children appeared to be relaxed and outspoken about intimate details. This was in contrast to the black children at school LP and KP where they seemed somewhat shy and reluctant. At SP, the Indian children were spontaneous and extremely jovial about issues. These nuances demonstrated their eagerness to participate in the discussion. Below are excerpts from the discussion which followed concerning the games and activities they were involved with.

At school MP the following inserts from coloured children were made regarding the games that were played. A mischievous girl, Amber, who was small in stature, said : “Bumping cars – Abba – you get on the boys back...” Toby, a girl who displayed masculine traits said, “We play wrestling.” Jarryd, a shy boy said “Sometimes we talk about sex and I don’t like that... I tell them you mustn’t talk about that ... they talk about private parts and all that... it’s wrong to talk about that...they say something and I tell them....”

At school LP, a black girl, Loren said “We play the ‘poppiehuis’... collect rubbish for poppiehuis...” Another girl, Linda said “You can play banyana-banyana”. This was the name given to the South African Soccer Team. One black girl, Kay, at school KP contributed by saying “...hide and seek...and running”.

An outspoken Indian girl, Fiona, at school SP said “...spin the bottle...spokies van die glas , monopoly and stuff like that.” This response was followed by laughter and different facial expressions. These responses are discussed later in the discussion.

In contrast to the findings at the above-mentioned schools, the white, coloured and black children at school RP, played a different set of games and participated in different entertainment activities. It is essential to view these findings below against the contextual description in Section 1. The children interviewed at school RP were confident and assertive. These were the responses from the children at school RP:

A coloured girl, Tina at school RP, proudly gave the following response when I enquired about the activities she was involved with: “Movies, shopping, lots of money... yes... our parents...” She was extremely self-assured and assertive. Another shy boy, named Byron said “...they normally play soccer...sometimes we sit in a circle and talk...we play Handball, hide and seek and on-on,” while Chris, the one who loved sport and outdoor games said, “sometimes we play cricket...” It was also interesting to note that at the other schools, none of the children mentioned cricket as a game they played, whereas at RP this seemed to be one of the games often played. During intervals, the boys at this particular school played cricket under the watchful eye of the educator on duty. At school RP children mainly visited malls and it appeared that they could afford the entertainment offered at these malls.

This limited evidence suggests that different forms of recreation are determined by the economic situation as reflected at each site. Accessibility to finances, as experienced at school RP, seems to determine the nature of the games played. This is in contrast to schools MP, LP, SP and KP where there is a lack of resources due to financial limitations. Children at these schools became creative and formulated their own activities and games.

#### 4.1.1.1 The gendered nature of games

In some environments there were fixed games for boys and girls while fluidity was evident in other places. However, when games included boys and girls, their sexual identities were invariably apparent and, as a result, the games were markedly gendered. The 'expected' and 'accepted' behaviours and dispositions of boys and girls were often embedded in the rules or the nature of the game. Little questioning seemed to occur regarding either aspect. In most cases girls and boys played separately. Games such as soccer were perceived as games that boys played. In cases where girls played soccer matches with the boys, the latter still dominated. They took the lead and observations revealed that the girls seemingly towed the line in order to stay in the game. Girls also had to defend themselves for wanting to participate in a game dominated by the boys.

The coloured and black girls at school MP who participated in this focus group discussion, were adamant and determined to be part of the boys' activities. They appeared to be a group of girls who had similar trends as regards their activities. From the interviews it could be deduced that they grouped together and had similar interests. They seemed keen about participating in boys' tasks and games. The black girls from KP were eager soccer fans since they enthusiastically participated in this discussion. Their eagerness was also previously confirmed by Linda who mentioned that they played banyana-banyana. While discussing the issue of girls wanting to participate in "boys' games", their responses were as follows:

Karla, a black girl from school KP said: "Girls can play soccer...It's not wrong to play soccer.... it's not wrong." Carlin, a coloured girl from school MP expressed her dissatisfaction about boys controlling the game of soccer. She said "I think it's unfair of the boys not to let us play soccer – sometimes they think the game is too rough for us...."

Toby, the coloured girl from MP added “We play wild games and the girls want to play with the boys...” Jarryd, a boy in the MP focus group said: “There are some girls who plays soccer sometimes....Just like we play soccer they just come and try to play with” By responding in this way, Jarryd implicitly stated that they (the boys) control the game.

Girls played games like jump-rope. This was a game played at schools MP and SP where two girls would skip while the rest would line up in a row, either singularly or paired and take turns to jump within the set rhythms of the skips. Another game would be to see how high they were able to jump. This game was mainly played by girls, during intervals at schools MP and SP. Girls would play in groups. The only time boys would appear was with the intention of disrupting the game in progress. At school MP, when one boy ventured to participate, his friends tauntingly jeered: “Look at the moffie.” The term ‘moffie’ was a colloquial term used for a male who displayed feminine characteristics. While the rest of the boys ran off, this one boy, despite the comment passed, continued to play with the girls. However, he was not readily accepted in the group and practically had to beg the girls to allow him to continue playing. In this context, where the gender tables were turned, the girls at school MP seemed to play out their dominance differently as compared to the boys. Both the girls and the boys at this particular school demonstrated by their actions and responses who is allowed to play and by whom this specific game was controlled.

At school SP, I observed during intervals, that cross-gender chasing games were quite frequently played and this usually started with an initial interjection in a teasing way among the girls and boys. One game in particular, entailed children running from pole to pole. The idea was that the girl would chase a boy and try to catch him between poles. Throughout this game there was continual teasing and the manner in which the boys would catch the girl was extremely physical. The girls at SP would respond in two different ways: either by angrily deterring the boys or laughingly gesticulating them to control themselves. What would then follow was intense teasing by the rest of the children.

#### 4.1.1.2 Sexual connotations linked to games

Within the process of game-playing and other observed activities, there appeared to be regular, if not persistent, allusions to sex. While it would be stretching the point to say that all the games the children were engaged in had sexual connotations, much of their interaction was surrounded with

potentially sexual implications. Some games resulted in interactions which one could describe as being explicitly sexual in nature. The emphasis then no longer seemed to be placed on the game or activity itself, but on the consequences, which often appeared to be sexual in nature. This occurred both consciously and unconsciously.

The Indian girls at SP were spontaneous. Sharlene, a talkative girl, seemed eager and easily communicated her thoughts concerning the sexual connotations regarding these games. The following excerpts reveal the sexual implications which certain games and actions entailed:

Sharlene : “You spin the bottle and if that point face you then they will dare you to do something between the girl and the boy... the boy and the girl have to go in the other room and kiss and that stuff and they take off your bra and all that...” In this conversation, Sharlene also said:

“They take the pencil and put it in your bum...if the boys do something they erase the board then they say the girls did it, meanwhile they did it and they just want to touch your bum...” (laughs)

Simone: “When you take off your bra and show the boys – then the boys have to touch it...” Simone appeared spontaneous while discussing this issue, while other girls in the group giggled and grinned throughout the discussion.

At school MP, Amber, who previously mentioned this particular game, gave a detailed explanation of the game Abba: “Bumping cars, Abba, Abba you get on the boys back... they will run with you on their back and they will bump each other...you can get hurt and they just run away when their hands accidentally touch you.” Desiree also from MP added “...they lay on us...like they are attacking you or something... it doesn’t feel nice (giggles and shakes head)... boys touch us everywhere, they even hit your bum....” Desiree, although she was short in stature, seemed extremely wise and outspoken.

These responses mainly came from girls who seemed to be aware of the sexual connotations revealed in the games. They could easily describe these nuances in relation to their activities.

These sexual connotations were determined by the space in which the game was employed. Games were played within specific spaces. It was observed that the above-mentioned games where there were distinct sexual connotations, were played in spaces free from adult supervision. The spaces



seemingly determined the nature of the games which ensued. Certain spaces served as loci in which specific games were played or the extent to which certain games were played. The spaces, which included the school playground, the classroom and home environment, conditioned the nature of the games. In addition to the above spaces, children also created private spaces which were not merely confined to physical location. These spaces were determined by the absence of an adult, which then enabled the sexual connotations to be reconfirmed and acted out. This was their way of making meaning of these particular spaces.

#### 4.1.2 Rules of the game

Within each game, rules play an essential role. Rules of the game therefore become both a literal and figurative application since the 'game' not only refers to the children's lore but also covers the wider spectrum of sexuality.

These rules are formulated in relation to the other and ultimately they are not fixed but fluid. The masculinity and femininity of the children are seemingly being established within the essence of the social practices with which they give substance to themselves. These social practices, for example the games, therefore serve as loci for the formation of these rules and patterns. The data below reveals the rule-constructing dispositions evident while games are played and children are involved in various activities.

Aggressive behaviour, name-calling, power dominance and unwarranted demands, result in children positioning themselves in a particular way, hereby shaping their sexual identity.

##### 4.1.2.1 Aggressive behaviour

Certain games and activities played at schools MP, SP and LP had specific consequences which contributed to them positioning themselves. These were physical, emotional and also lead to distinctive construction of sexual identity. Boys adopted a seemingly aggressive approach, which was tolerated by the girls as clearly shown in the following excerpts:

Amber from MP: "they will bump each other sometimes they can play very rough – you can get hurt."

Sharlene from SP said: “They [the boys] don’t do any good they put rugby balls in your mouth...this other boy he puts pencils in your bum ...he is very rude...and I don’t like boys.”

#### 4.1.2.2 Name calling

Sharlene not only endures bodily harm, but also slandering and harsh utterances exercised by the boys. She continues by saying: “They call me names, they call me fat pig and stuff and I really don’t like it...it makes me feel very sad....”

Simone from SP: “We can never talk to boys because they just want to fight, fight, fight. Sometimes we want to talk to them but they are very, very rude.”

#### 4.1.2.3 Powerlessness versus strength

The girls seem to act as passive recipients, since the manner in which they displayed their control over choices appears to be reduced. Despite the manner in which the girls at school MP and LP are treated, they tolerate the power displays demonstrated by the boys. In doing so, they establish certain rules regarding their femininity.

Toby, the girl from MP said: “We have two friends – we play with them during interval – they give us chips and we play arm wrestling – **it’s not so how strong they are – it’s that they play with us.** Sometimes they take us...they hold us... sometimes their hands go there... they smear us... they go with their hands to the lower body by the tummy...and they are not supposed to do that to girls. Amber also demonstrated this need to play with the boys by saying: “We play wild games and **the girls want to play with the boys, it’s our own fault.**”

The excerpts, indicated in bold, show how girls are complicit in perpetuating the male’s dominance over them, hereby feminising this social practice. Although they are aware of the implications, they tend to expose themselves to the continual victimization as dealt out by these boys. It appears that desperation is evident and much tolerance is displayed.

In addition to the tolerance displayed, certain girls at school MP and LP spoke about their perception of boys as strong. At school MP, Carlin said: “Men are stronger than women and they rape...because men rape women...some girls are scared of all men...Men are stronger – they can kill – take knives...their hands are stronger” Karla from KP agreed to this by saying: “Don’t hit the woman because the girl she has no power in it.” A further demonstration of power was demonstrated when Karlin from KP said: “the boys forced us to come and play.... You don’t really enjoy the game.” Another indication of the boys dominance was when Beverley from MP said: “sometimes they take us... they hold us...”, while Amber also said, “Sometimes I’m scared... maybe their hands can go... somewhere they don’t belong...” Beulah, in the same focus group said, “They fight and they play games which can hurt us like she said – while you work they hinder us.”

This suggests that the strength which the boys at school MP and KP have, is acknowledged by the girls as mentioned above. These boys are therefore ‘respected’ for superior physical power and the girls ‘accept’ this. Among the respondents, the perception of men being defined as ‘strong’ and women as ‘weak’ still exist. The boys’ mechanisms of control are thus stronger than that of these girls. This was further illustrated by the following excerpts. Desiree from MP said: “If you have a boyfriend and you don’t go out with him anymore – you have to love him.” Within this excerpt the control of the boys at this school is evident. Although she (Desiree) has stopped the relationship with the boy, they (the boys) still control the situation and seemingly ‘demands’ the girl to still treat him special. Another way in which this control was demonstrated, was when Lerene from school LP said: “Boys just take things if a girl is eating and she asks and he doesn’t give”.

At these specific schools mentioned above, a strong contradiction exists between the perpetuation of male dominance and the girls’ acceptance of being victims of such behaviour. These girls at the afore-mentioned schools, are therefore left powerless and are passively subjected to whatever happens to them, whereas the boys, by wanting to hit the girls or take them, tend to rely on their physical strength as a means of displaying their power. Unknowingly, these boys bully the girls and in doing so, the girls at schools MP and KP shape their feminine identity.

Often, this seems to go uncontested, thereby instilling the practice as a norm, specifically if pursued within a disciplinary institution such as the school. At school SP, Sharlene said “boys are like that.”

At school MP, Amber shared this incident: “The boy in my class he touch you everywhere, he even ‘peed’ (urinated) in front of the class. When we went on a field trip, he opened his zip... when he does something wrong to us. We tell my sir, he does nothing. He lifts up the girl he was kissing her.” The teacher was informed but nothing was done. This silent response from the teacher, implicitly conveyed the message that this behaviour is condoned and unconsciously, this practice contributes to validating the girls’ at inferior feminine identity.

The discussion has thus far demonstrated how games are social practices in which children at the afore-mentioned sites, feminize and masculinise their behaviour. The variety of games, as mentioned in this section, demonstrate genderedness and sexual connotations. These social practices and various dispositions in which children find themselves, enable the rules of the games to be introduced. The nature of chores in and out of school will now be discussed.

## 4.2 Chores in and out of school

### 4.2.2 Positioning in social space

It appears that the manner in which children position themselves within social spaces is dependent on the nature and location of the space in which they find themselves. As social actors, children seem to play into the distinctive roles as determined by the activities they are involved with. Distinct differentiation with regard to relations and activities is evident in the lives of ten-year old children. These existing gender differences serve as structural properties of societies to enable them to construct their sexual identities. This differentiation is primarily related to gender.

#### 4.2.2.1 Chores exercised within domestic spaces

Gender differences are revealed in the activities and chores that the children are involved in. Out of the dominant discourse of heterosexuality emerges the discursive formation of dichotomized gender roles. Biological inscription, which includes physical strength, seems to be the determining factor. The limited findings below endeavours to demonstrate how children construct their sexual identity by either resisting to, or accepting the dichotomized gender roles they are offered by society.

When enquiring about the chores children are expected to do at home the following responses were given. These responses were from school LP where children, especially the girls seemed to be occupied with chores mainly inside the house.

Loren, the girl who was previously involved in collecting items for 'poppie-huis' said, "I wash dishes." Lerene said, "I washing floor" while Linda responded, "I washing shirt and stuff" and Loretta alluded to these types of activities by saying: "I clean and I cook..."

When enquiring about the nature of the chores their parents did, the following responses were given at school MP, Toby said, "My daddy – he sees that everything gets paid – doors locked" Beverley, a neatly dressed girl, described her father's position by saying, "My father he is the head of the house. He is the boss of the house – because he bought the house, payments are his responsibilities", while Carlin, the girl who replied when asked about her mother's role "She must be there. She buys food/clothing – she does the work" The parents, it seemed, set the framework for the manner in which chores and activities are done at home.

A distinct impression of division of labour was prevalent at this specific school. There were no chances of boys venturing onto the girls' territory. These respondents were associating their duties to being male or female. The respondents at this school, LP, were fixated within a particular mindset and this contributed to the manner in which they positioned themselves socially. The children alluded to the fact that the girls' physical strength and biological makeup were not designed so as to enable them to perform those assigned chores. The black children at school MP did not seem to question this division of labour that existed. Loren said, "it is right to me because I am the girl," Linda re-affirmed Loren's response by saying, "It is not right to wash car, they (the girls) must wash the dishes"

At school RB, these were their responses: Toby, a girl responded by saying: "I clean the pool and my room", while the other girl, Tina said "I wipe the table and do the dishes." Byron provided this perspective: "Women and girls always does stuff – men should help women."

At this school, children, although they each had specific duties to perform which were based on girls having chores inside the home and boys having chores outside the home, were willing to share responsibilities and were not bound to a fixed division of labour.

At school SP, these were some of the responses: Cheryl, “In our home we share the responsibilities.” Larry, another respondent, said that the women were not bringing in money and this entitled men to “lay around” and demand that women do the work. He said: “Ladies don’t bring in money. We earn money so that they (the women) can spend the money.” Implicitly he stated that men had reason and were justified in not being involved in household chores. According to him, they were the ones who contributed financially to the household. On closer investigation, it was discovered that this boy’s mother was a home executive, which explains his attitude. It was obvious that these children observed the example set in the home by their parents. Further responses from this same school, SP, were the following: Cheryl, who started the conversation, also added: “One week my mother cooks, next week my father cooks. They share jobs.” Beulah, a shy girl said: “All help. In our house there is equal job division.”

In contrast to the above discussion at school MP, where jobs seemed to be equally shared, a coloured girl, named Becky, who hadn’t contributed much to the conversation, made an interesting response. She said: “My father does everything. My mother just lays at home. My mother should also help. Both should help each other. The right thing, is to do an equal share of the work and work together.” Although this was the way in which things were done at home, she still had her personal convictions of how things should be done. Bonita’s response was, “In my house my mother cooks everyday...I’m fine with it.” She again accepted the manner in which frameworks were set in her home.

After closer scrutiny, it was discovered that the nature of the jobs the parents held, determined the times when they would be at home which would then often determine who would perform specific duties at home. This detail is provided in the contextual description of the sites.

#### 4.2.2.2 Chores exercised within the school environment

The normal routine would be, to provide children the opportunity of cleaning classrooms, picking up papers on school grounds and assisting educators in various ways. The manner in which chores were issued, seemed to contribute to the children positioning themselves in particular ways.

When enquiring about the nature of chores given to boys and girls, the following responses were given. School LP, revealed the following findings: Desiree said “teachers give the girls [instructions to] wash the floor.” Loren said: “Teacher give sweep the class to boy.” Lerene: “because like the teacher says to the boys wash the floor – the boys say no they will rather wash the window... he says he is a boy and not a girl.”

These children at school LP, responded in a similar manner they responded to when questioned about the household chores. This distinct division of labour was experienced within the school situation as well, whereby specific chores were given to girls and boys. The similarity, at school LP, between the home and the school situation, is significant.

At school SP, it was observed that duties were assigned on a rotational basis, irrespective of its nature. Simone confirmed this observation by saying: “We all have a turn to do the chores, irrespective of if you are a girl or boy.” At this same school, there was a distinct difference in the manner in which the boys and girls were disciplined. Boys were exposed to hidings and were assigned to detention for a three-week-period in the event of misconduct, whereas girls were only assigned to a detention period of one day. At this school, SP, it therefore seemed acceptable for the girls to assume this lesser role, since it was advantageous to them. However, it could be argued that this is a subtle way in which the girls are led to believe that this should be the norm. The above suggests that this specific educational institution is somehow facilitating this mindset.

Some children are resisting dichotomized gender roles, as illustrated in the following response from SP when Larry said “It’s unfair girls must stay in for one day.” Others, it seemed, accepted these gender roles as indicated by Loren at school LP “It is right to me because I am a girl.”

From the limited evidence provided above, it appears that chores form a major part of children’s lives, both in and out of school which allow a wide range of positionings to be at play. In these findings, the contexts in which these children find themselves strongly influence their social positioning. These findings relating to the chores, in and out of school, are now followed by the theme family, significant others and sexual identity.

### 4.3 Family, Significant others and Sexual Identity

The following findings demonstrate that children are agents in the co-construction of sexuality. Children are usually watched closely by their parents, older siblings and other adults. However, they also play an integral role in having a closer look at what others are doing. They are not only shaped by events and experiences, but they themselves also shape.

#### 4.3.2 Influence through parents and siblings

The following evidence demonstrates the manner in which children model and scrutinize the behaviour of their parents, siblings and other influential adults who impact on their lives.

At school MP, the following response was made by Beverley, the neatly dressed and conservative girl: “My sister is pregnant – she is 18. My daddy doesn’t know if he must feel happy. My sister is not my mommy’s child...Having a small baby – her future...how are you gonna live? Her mom is also not working. I feel sad – why did she have the baby?”

Sharlene, from SP, appeared rather upset when she said, “Some children have babies while they’re still in high school – some children leave high school and live on their own. This is bad – it’s sorrowful for the parents – because they don’t know how to handle the children – they don’t know all the responsibilities of having a child. The teenagers won’t have a job or something because they don’t have any studies. They have their own lives ahead of them – they could have still made something out of them but now they wasted a chance and have children.”

At school RP the following was Tina’s response: “My grandmother died and my family just went crazy...well my aunt, she’s a nurse...and every week she has a new boyfriend and she’s like almost 40. she has a child that’s 16...the other child doesn’t want to go to school and now she also has a child.” Tina was exposed to a strong matriarchal influence. Since her grandmother’s death, promiscuity ruled.

From the above discussion, it can be deduced that the children at the schools MP, SP and RP are being shaped by experiences happening around them. Thus, these experiences either constrain or enable them. It appears that, in this way these specific children, shape their future happenings and



exercise agency by choice. Therefore, these children's sexual identities are constructed and deconstructed by present lived experiences.

At school MP the following discussion on the issue of role models took place.

Jarryd: "My mother is my role model. She never slept around" When asked what he meant by this, Amber replied: "He's happy she didn't sleep around. Sometimes we don't know if our mothers slept around with somebody else...sometimes I get this feeling in my bones that we must take an AIDS test...something is telling me we must I get that feeling because we don't know if my mother slept with somebody else" The conversation continued and Beverley said: " Sometimes mommy's doing night shift at G. Hospital... sometimes I wonder what is my mother doing at the hospital? Is she cheating on my father because men also work night shift...and you never know what can happen." In a protective utterance Desiree said: "They are now thinking the badder things of their mother – I don't think it's right", Toby added: "We suppose to give them privacy – we talked about that." Despite this interjection, Toby said "My daddy talks about the lady he works with, but I still believe in my daddy because he will not do such a thing."

It is apparent from this limited evidence that relatives, family and friends are closely watched by children at schools MP,SP,LP and RP. Behaviour, as performed by adults is seemingly critically scrutinized. Both the seer and the seen are implicated. These children critically view and gauge various situations. This critical attitude of children illustrates that they are not mere imitators but constructors as they shape their sexual identity.

#### 4.3.3 Influence through communication

The following focus groups' excerpts demonstrate the freedom with which children discuss sexual issues with their parents. This appears to be essential since it has a direct bearing on the manner in which they will formulate and construct their sexual identity.

Tina from RP said: "I mostly speak to my mom...and she promises she wouldn't tell. Um we talk about sex, AIDS, a whole lot of things...Mom tells me to have sex when I'm 20 – 25 or that. About getting condoms for free."

Sharlene from SP said: “My mother and my father are divorced. We have a very close relationship and we love each other. I can tell my mother anything I want to she’s like the closest friend I ever had. I asked her how do you get your periods and she said you get your periods when you are eight...”

Beverley from MP said: “I can tell my mom everything how my day was ...if I go to my friends what did I do and how I feel. I’m a debutante and we talk about that stuff. I also ask her stuff how I’m feeling if a boy fights with me. I’m always worried what can happen to me.”

From the afore-going discussions, it is evident that issues relating to sexuality, appear to be easily communicated to mothers. The interaction which is forthcoming, and the in-depth discussions enable children to position themselves in such a manner that their construction process is facilitated. Their perceptions as regards sexual issues are moulded and formulated in particular ways hereby impacting on the way in which they construct their sexual identity.

Kay from KP said: “I am close to my mother. We talk about sex. She said I must not do sex with someone with HIV/AIDS. I ask lots of questions. I must not play with the boys they are dangerous. Yes...they make sex with someone who is already there HIV.”

Jarryd from MP said: “I learn most things from my mother – she is the most important person. She works for a place where there is files and that stuff and I learn most stuff from her...that you mustn’t actually just have sex with anyone and when you grow up you must...make sure how things are gonna be before you have a relationship and that’s very important because faith is always first in your relationship.” After mentioning these things about his mother, Jarryd added:

“When my mother asks me do you have a girlfriend – now I don’t understand that because only when I’m ready to tell my mother....” This somehow illustrates that, although he appreciates fact that he can talk to his mother, he does not enjoy the personal and pertinent questions about himself and his relationship with girls.

This evidence suggests that mothers play strong roles in these children’s lives and, seemingly, appear to be the strong character at the head of the household structure, shaping the construction of their children’s sexual identities. It is through conversation and the interaction between children and parents, that principles are instilled and values are embedded.

Parental influence, however, is not limited to the mother. A black boy, Joshua from KP, revealed an intimate bond which he shared with his grandfather. His interesting response was as follows: “I live with my grandfather. My mother and father divorced long time ago. I am closest to my grandfather. He’s always nice to me – give me everything. When I am wrong he says you are wrong. We talk about AIDS, how old you are when you want a girl...then he says if you want a girl wait to have sex when you are older than eighteen...the relationship is about girls, sex, pregnancy, using a condom when we have sex.”

From this discussion it can be noted that a mutual understanding existed between the grandfather and his grandson. A strong relationship existed and the grandfather compensated for the absence of the mother. His parents were divorced. “I live with my grandfather – my mother and father divorced long time ago.”

This same boy had a ‘girlfriend’ about whom he spoke without inhibitions. He said: “Yes, I am involved with girls. We love each other... kiss on the cheek, hugs, roses, everything....”

When asked about what they occupy themselves when they’re alone he replied: “We talk about when we get older we will do this and this...be married, have a great home.”

The relationship with his grandfather propelled Joshua to pursue such a relationship and regard it as the norm within his specific age-group.

In addition to the evidence relating to the games children play, the chores they are occupied with and the influence of family and significant others, findings involving children and the media will now be presented.

#### 4.4 Media and Sexual Identity

There are myriad influences which serve as loci for the construction of sexual identity. The television, sibling and parental influences, as well as religion, contribute to sexuality construction in children.

#### 4.4.1 The role of television on sexual identity

The television as media form, together with the radio have also been highlighted as loci for the construction of sexuality. The strength of this media form as well as parents, siblings and peers are major contributory factors in producing modern sexualities. The following findings demonstrate the manner in which the media, specifically the television, is perceived by the children from MP, KP and RP and how it enables or constrains them to be involved in certain activities which directly affects the manner in which their sexual identities are constructed.

Jarryd from MP said: The TV tell us a lot...but the programmes are sometimes just too much for us. Too many things are shown every child can't handle that...look in my class the boys just want to talk about that stuff... I don't like it and I am with them all the time because I like to.

Beverley from MP said: "On TV they show wrestling and fighting it is cruel." Toby from MP said: "...children they want to do it. Nudity, violence, mostly is movies... especially what the boys talk. They talk about Emmanuel...and it's not nice. Some boys say they are going to make Emmanuel... some boys when they show they like grab you. They shouldn't show such movies."

Kaylene from KP: "TV can show you things you are not supposed to do and it can change you. It's not good to watch TV with lots of sex you can dream about those things but the things TV show you, you musn't do sex that changes you. They do funny things they are not supposed to do," while Byron from RP said: "it's not good if you wanna watch. You maybe do those something... that stuff. Like the bad guys steal you want to steal..."

Karla from KP said: "Isn't right the programs – boys and girls having sex, can't watch it, they would just want to do it."

Joshua from KP: "Some kids do what they see on TV. You must be over 18."

Tina from RP said: "It does affect people's behaviour....like some people they let their children watch those movies, violent movies. They learn to do violence."

At school MP, the concern was so great about the implications of wrestling on television, that the principal of the school sent out a letter asking parents to discourage children from watching wrestling as this was resulting in all sorts of behavioural problems.

Television together with peers, parents and significant others, play a major role in the social constructions in which sexual identity formation is located. It serves as loci for prevailing discourses.

#### 4.5 Transcending the boundaries

At one particular school, MP, the following unexpected finding emerged. This came about after a discussion on the chores. One particular participant seemed to be shaping her sexuality by transcending the boundaries of the biological. In order to contextualise the argument, I have included most of the discussion as it occurred in the focus group.

From this discussion two issues emanated. The one specifically pertains to the response of the respondent who appeared to transcend the boundaries of the biological. The other issue pertains to the religious connotations which such a shift seemingly entails. This data has been isolated by underscoring the relevant excerpts.

Jarryd: Why do boys want to be like women, when they were small they know what women go through. I think it is wrong if boys want to be women. I want to know why they want to be gay.

Beverley: I think they maybe want to be gay they should watch out for thing if anything happens like they go to hell for doing that for turning to a girl. God created us as a boy or a girl. I think it's right. Why can't you just be human beings? In the Bible you shouldn't change yourself....

Toby: "I don't understand what she's saying because it's your body if you want to be someone that you're not – it's not gonna work out. If you feel you want to be that person, you must be that person."

Amber: "... if a man wants to change to a women he can ma change into a dress or what ever...he will still be a man..."

Toby: “I disagree because inside of them they wish they can be a girl... so they can give them a make-over.”

Beverley: “...they can wish all their life they can’t be a girl.”

Toby: “she is wrong she is telling me that if someone change like that they are different. They are not different at all because they feel like they want to be someone else. People who are lesbian... or something like that they respect who they are ...their mothers respect who they are you can’t say it’s right or wrong.”

Kurt from KP said: “...you are the girl and not the boy...Jesus said you are the girl you are not going to change.”

Toby appears to be a girl who is extremely close to her brother. She is called a tom-boy, has interests in wrestling, scary movies and enjoys boys’ company. She said: “I don’t like girly stuff. I play wrestling, soccer and boys stuff.” All these factors have seemingly influenced the way she shapes her sexuality.

Interestingly, the complexity of this particular issue was aggravated by the religious insinuations made by the learners. In this conversation it appears that, when moving beyond the boundaries of the biological, the religious convictions, especially that of Christianity comes to the fore. The nature of this particular response therefore questions the influence of religion by the manner in which the children perceive their masculinity and femininity.

I started this chapter by presenting the contextual findings as a background against which the main findings could be understood. The discussions which followed were therefore informed by the contextual descriptions presented. The focus of the chapter then moved from these wider contextual findings to the specifics of the main findings. The main findings have demonstrated that the social practices, albeit leisure or chores, which form a major part of children’s lives, are integral to their sexual identity construction. In addition to these social practices, the media serves as a locus which stimulates the sexual development of boys and girls, while the family and significant others, through influence and communication, helped to shape these individuals’ sexuality. Lastly, the response of anomaly, enabled a reflexive introspection which resulted in a shift in thinking of gender as an accepted norm.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the themes that emerged from the findings presented in chapter 4.

The emergence of HIV/AIDS is a major threat to children and the development of their sexual identity. In the era of postmodernity, it could be argued that HIV/AIDS has reconstructed the personal space of the child, resulting in a shift from thinking of identity as a mere representational space, to viewing identity as a meeting place of the social and the sexual, located within a historical context. It is against this premise that the main findings suggest that children seemingly construct their sexual identities through different and differing influences within complex discursive spaces. These influences, embedded in predominantly heterosexual discourses, seem to perpetuate a distinct behavioural trend which masculinises and feminises children's sexual identities in particular ways that work to re-inscribe the dominant discourse and its concomitant social practices.

I shall now discuss these findings within the various theoretical perspectives referred to in the literature review, using theory as a map or a guide so as to allow "one to see as connected what was unconnected before" (Graue, et al. 1998).

The history of South Africa has particularly emphasized the need to view context as an imperative analytical device for understanding the moulding and shaping of sexual identity. It is in implementing this form of analysis, that underlying meanings and reasons for certain behavioural trends, as regards sexuality, can be appreciated and clarified.

The existing and past conditions of South Africa were characterized by migrant labour, colonial rule, political hegemony, richness in diverse cultures, polarity evident between wealth and poverty, differences in ethnicity, social class and gender. These conditions directly affect the ways in which children position themselves, particularly with regards to their masculinity and femininity. This context provides the set of determinations in which sexual construction is embedded. Social worlds, as contexts, stimulate and ultimately mould personalities and sexual identity formations (Walker et al. 2005). These social worlds appear to be essential context-forming factors which contribute to the development of predispositions, hereby creating the location which develops the sexual identity construction (Bourdieu 1993). The routine involvement which children have in their

social worlds, enable them to acquire tendencies to act and view issues in particular ways. Their habitus, a term originally coined by Bourdieu (1977) is crucial since the predispositions inculcated at this stage of their development, play themselves out reproductively.

Another interesting aspect of this Bourdieu's theory is the "focus on the advantages enjoyed by those with greater access to cultural resources" (Corsaro 1997:10). In the sphere of sexuality, the development of those who have less access to resources seem to be accelerated as they tend to rely on their creativity, hereby allowing themselves to discover and develop faster. The discussions they engaged in and the means of interaction witnessed, revealed that those children with less access appear to be more advanced sexually, despite their lack of physical resources. The rigid developmental phases as set by Piaget also become questionable since, as social actors, children have agency over their development, and are not mere passive, biological and asexual beings. The prescriptive element of the development process, is also placed under scrutiny.

The set of determinations and the predispositions center around social worlds which gained much relevance within this study. The social worlds or contexts resulted in the sexuality of children to be fluid, diverse and ever-changing. These responses were similar to those found by Kelly and Ntlabati (2002) in that their studies also revealed a range of influences, reflected in the contextual, intersite differences, which mediated issues of sexuality.

The emphasis placed on context as revealed in the study, is in contrast to Piaget's use of a 'contextless context' where laboratory rooms were used. In Piaget's case, context was reduced to the limited engagement of children's activities and their cognition (Dilley 1999), whereas this study suggests that this particular developmental theory requires qualification when looking at existing and past South African conditions. The continual insertions of children in a range of different institutions and placing them in relation to agents, who contribute strongly to the shaping of their identities, are crucial to appreciate for an attempt to understand what shapes the process of children's sexual identity construction. As the findings suggest, children are not able to develop solely on the basis of the activities between themselves and the activity. Children cannot be isolated from their social worlds but their backgrounds, institutions, family and children's lore, play a vital function in giving character to this process.



Children's lore, of which games or interactive play in the life of the Grade 5 learner, forms an essential social activity. These fundamentally controlling mechanisms provide a rich container for their social relations. The data reveals that through games or interactive play, serious gender manifestations are made. Through these social practices, girls learn about 'girlishness' and boys learn about 'boyhood.' These social practices therefore serve as loci for the formation of rules and patterns. Dispositions become rule-constructing opportunities that directly impact on childrens' masculinity and femininity. The rules of the game become both a literal and figurative application, since the 'game' not only refers to the childrens' lore, but also covers the wider spectrum of sexuality identity construction. These rules, which are inadvertently constructed, are formulated in relation to the other and the continuity of a specific action will depend on the positive and negative feedbacks received from the audience encountered. This, therefore implies, that the dominance experienced by the males will continue while the females play into this kind of behaviour. Gender, as revealed in this study, is therefore not biological, but is continually constructed.

Within the gender construction of the respondents, the application of performance (Goffman cited in Nagel 2004) and performativity (Butler 1993) could clearly be noted. By allowing the boys to dominate, the girls appeared to play into the role of the submissive and tolerant gender, thus creating this phenomenon of performance. It was evident that the body became the instrument of this performance, consciously and unconsciously, as well as, explicitly and implicitly. Gender was performed in myriads of ways which included how the children talked, gesticulated, played games and used body language. This "repertoire of performances" became evident in their actions (Nagel 2004:52). Gender and sexuality were not only performed, but was also performative. Hegemonic social rules and definitions were constructed and reaffirmed. This repeated performance of gender, resulted in the children becoming gendered. An interesting aspect within the construction process, was the various aspects which either perturbed or encouraged the performative gender order. The data has revealed, by the actions of the anomaly, that the understandings of performativity seem to be mainly unconscious and often inaccessible to others in everyday actions and thoughts. It appears that children alter the femininity of their behaviour and cross the biological boundaries hereby questioning the dominant discourse of heterosexuality. Religion, the silent response and model behaviour often strongly impacted on the manner in which gender was constructed.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

In an ultimate quest to find the answer to the research question: “In the context of HIV/AIDS, how do intermediate phase children construct sexual identities?” this study has revealed, through the dialectical process of developing the theory based on data collected, that:

- Children construct their sexual identities within a context-dependant and situation-specific environment. It is against specific contextual backgrounds that their sexuality is constructed. Socio-economic factors and historical background play a major role in the shaping of their sexuality.
- The activities or children’s lore in which they occupy themselves, such as games, chores and entertainment, are all concomitant social practices in which they sexually position themselves in a particular way. Involvement in these activities enhances the shaping of their masculinity and femininity. It is evident that children are actively engaged in establishing the rules of the game while being immersed in their daily activities. These formulated rules serve as a framework which determines their dispositions, resulting in them masculinising and feminizing their behaviour.
- Myriad institutions and agents directly influence the way in which the children are shaped sexually. Parents and siblings, through interaction, communication and modeling behaviour, prescribe the prerequisites and formulation of sexual identity construction, hereby enhancing the shaping process. In addition to this, the visual and auditory strength of the media contribute to the way in which sexual construction occurs.
- The dominant discourse of heterosexuality has also been challenged. One learner, the anomaly, constructed her sexual identity by transcending the boundaries of her biological gender. The confines of the physical have not limited her exploration of questioning her femaleness and partially replacing these nuances with masculine tendencies. This emphasizes the duality of gender as a construction rather than a biological manifestation.

Ten-year-old children are seemingly actively drawn in this process of sexual identity construction. The findings have revealed that sexuality, in relation to children, cannot be viewed as a separate entity, but as an integrated process to which children dynamically contribute as they continually construct and deconstruct this sexual developmental experience.

## 5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Cognisance should be taken of children's individual cultural and social background. Children are not a homogenous group, but are characterized by diversity and varied contexts. It is thus essential for schools to address this difference.

5.5.2 More emphasis should be placed on behavioural skills. Children are currently being inundated with knowledge while the behavioural aspects are not prioritized.

5.5.3 Influences which impact on children's sexuality should be scrutinized. Life skill projects should extend beyond the school and infiltrate on the home boundaries so that there can be a continuum and not a juxtaposition between home and school.

5.5.4 The Education Department should not to be isolated from the broadcasting authorities. Since the world of the child has expanded, caution should be taken to the general exposure given to sexual matters on television. Programmes screened should be to the benefit and not to the detriment of children's sexual development.

5.5.5 Since South Africa is adversely affected by the AIDS pandemic, life skills specialists should be employed at schools which would contribute to the healthy nurturing of children as regards their sexuality. The staff who are currently employed to teach life skills, are not necessarily specialists in this field. Hence, there is no guarantee that the correct information regarding sexual identity construction is imparted to children. This is crucial in the developmental process since the correct intervention can affect the outcome of children's sexuality.

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21 July 2003

Dear Parents/Guardians

A research is currently being conducted on the attitudes and knowledge which the learners in Grade 5 have on HIV/AIDS.

I hereby request your permission for your son/daughter to participate in the research project. Research tools will entail a survey, group and individual interviews.

Your co-operation in this regard is much appreciated.

Yours faithfully

.....  
HILDA ROLLS  
MASTERS STUDENT (UCT)

Reply Slip

I .....(Name of parent/guardian) hereby grant/do not  
grant permission for my son/daughter ..... in Grade 5...  
to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

.....  
SIGNATURE: PARENT/GUARDIAN

.....  
DATE

## LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE: ATTITUDES TO HIV/AIDS

1. Pet Name: .....

2. Number (to be filled in by researcher).....

3. Age (Tick one ✓)

1	9	
2	10	
3	11	
4	12	
5	13	
6	14	
7	Other: Stipulate	

4. Gender (Tick one ✓)

1	Male	
2	Female	

5. What is your home language? (Tick one ✓)

1	Afrikaans	
2	English	
3	Xhosa	
4	Other (state what it is)	

6. Name the place where you live.

---

7. What kind of house do you live in? (Tick one ✓)

1	House in an informal settlement	
2	House in a township/suburb	
3	Other	

8. How many bedrooms are there in your house? (Tick one ✓ )

1	One	
2	Two	
3	Three	
4	More	
5	Other (please explain)	

9. Do you have running water in your house? (Tick one ✓ )

1	Yes	
2	No	

10. Do you have electricity? (Tick one ✓ )

1	Yes	
2	No	

11. Who do you live with? (Tick one ✓ )

1	Mother and father	
2	Father only	
3	Mother Only	
4	Grandmother	
5	Grandparents	
6	Uncle or Aunt	
7	Other: Stipulate	

12. How many brothers and sisters do you have? (Tick one ✓ )

1	One	
2	Two	
3	Three	
4	Four	
5	Five	
6	More than five	

13. What is your position in your family? (Tick one ✓ )

1	First-born	
2	Second-born	
3	Third-born	
4	Fourth-born	
5	Fifth-born	
6	Other	

14. Who else lives in your house with you?

15. What are your hobbies?

16. Mother’s education. (Tick one ✓ )

1	Grade Four	
2	Grade Five	
3	Grade Six	
4	Grade Seven	
5	Grade Eight	
6	Grade Nine	
7	Grade Ten	
8	Grade Eleven	
9	Grade Twelve	
10	Higher than Grade Twelve	

17. Father’s education. (Tick one ✓ )

1	Grade Four	
2	Grade Five	
3	Grade Six	
4	Grade Seven	
5	Grade Eight	
6	Grade Nine	
7	Grade Ten	
8	Grade Eleven	
9	Grade Twelve	
10	Higher than Grade Twelve	

18. Father's Occupation

19. Mother's Occupation

20. Is your father currently employed? (Tick one ✓ )

1	Yes	
2	No	

21. Is your mother currently employed? (Tick one ✓ )

1	Yes	
2	No	

22. Who looks after you when you get home after school? (Tick one ✓ )

1	Mother	
2	Grandmother	
3	Brother/sister	
4	Other (specify)	

23. Which learning area or subjects do you enjoy most?

24. What do you want to become when you finish school?

25. What religion do you belong to?

26. What do you like most about school?

27. What do you like least about school?

## LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE 2: KNOWLEDGE OF HIV/AIDS

A. Name .....

B. Number (to be filled in by researcher).....

C. Tick the appropriate response.

1. AIDS can be contracted by:

1	Sharing the same cup	
2	Using the same toilet	
3	Hugging	
4	Unprotected sex	
5	Sharing the same needle	
6	Blood Transfusion	
7	From mother to child (breastfeeding/pregnancy)	

2. AIDS can be cured by:

1	AZT	
2	Antibiotics	
3	Non of the above	

3. AIDS can be transmitted sexually from:

1	Male to female	
2	Male to male	
3	Female to female	

4. I can determine whether my friend or relative has HIV/AIDS if they?

1	Are thin	
2	Have sores	
3	Have hair Loss	
4	None of the above	



5. Who has given you the most information relating to HIV/AIDS?

1	Home	
2	School	
3	Church	
4	Friends	

6. I would avoid all forms of contact with anyone I knew who had AIDS?

1	YES	
2	NO/	
3	NOT SURE	

7. I would stop being friends with the person if I discovered that he/she had AIDS.

1	YES	
2	NO	
3	NOT SURE	

8. I believe that children with AIDS should be allowed to attend school.

1	YES	
2	NO	
3	NOT SURE	

9. I believe that doctors who get AIDS should not be allowed to go on working with their patients.

1	YES	
2	NO	
3	NOT SURE	

10. AIDS is not my problem.

1	YES	
2	NO	
3	NOT SURE	

11. Someone I know is infected with HIV.

1	YES	
2	NO	
3	NOT SURE	

Thank you

### Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

TOPIC QUESTION	CORE QUESTIONS	PROMPTS
FAMILY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You've mentioned that you are living with A? Where is B?</li> <li>Who are you closest to in your family?</li> <li>Why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you feel about the death/divorce etc.</li> </ul>
FRIENDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are your friends?</li> <li>Male &amp; Female?</li> <li>What is your preference</li> <li>Best friend?</li> <li>What makes that person so special?</li> <li>Who is the leader?</li> <li>Why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the things which you do together</li> <li>As group are you always interested in the same things?</li> <li>What happens when you differ on certain decisions?</li> <li>Can you think of something which you wouldn't want your parents to know of?</li> </ul>
MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you often watch television?</li> <li>What are your best programmes?</li> <li>Why?</li> <li>When did you last watch a movie?</li> <li>Do you think it is important to have age-restrictions? Why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When do you watch tv?</li> <li>Have you watched an age restricted movie?</li> <li>What would happen if your parents discovered that you were watching these?</li> </ul>
AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which sexually transmitted disease is most often spoken of?</li> <li>Who are at risk of being infected by the disease?</li> <li>How did you get to hear/know about this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why?</li> </ul> <p>School: What have you learnt about it in school?  In life-skills/from peers/  Church: Sunday school/ youth/ Priest  <b>How does your knowledge you gain in church help you in your everyday life as regards AIDS?</b>  Clinic: Nurses/ visit clinic?</p>